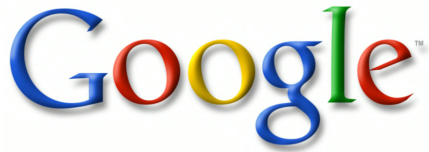


This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

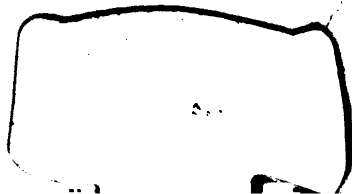
+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

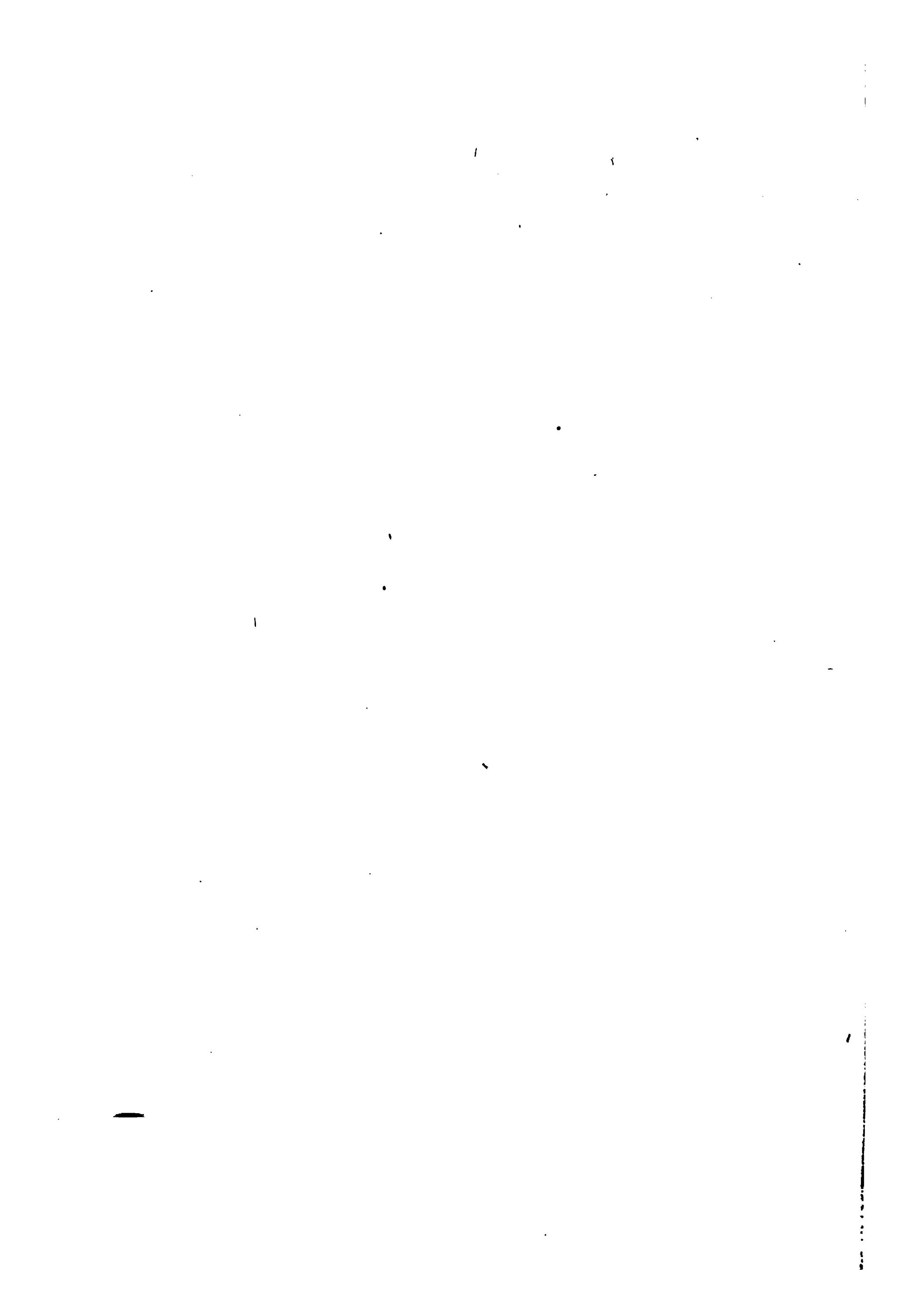
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/

A GIFT TO THE LIBRARY OF THE

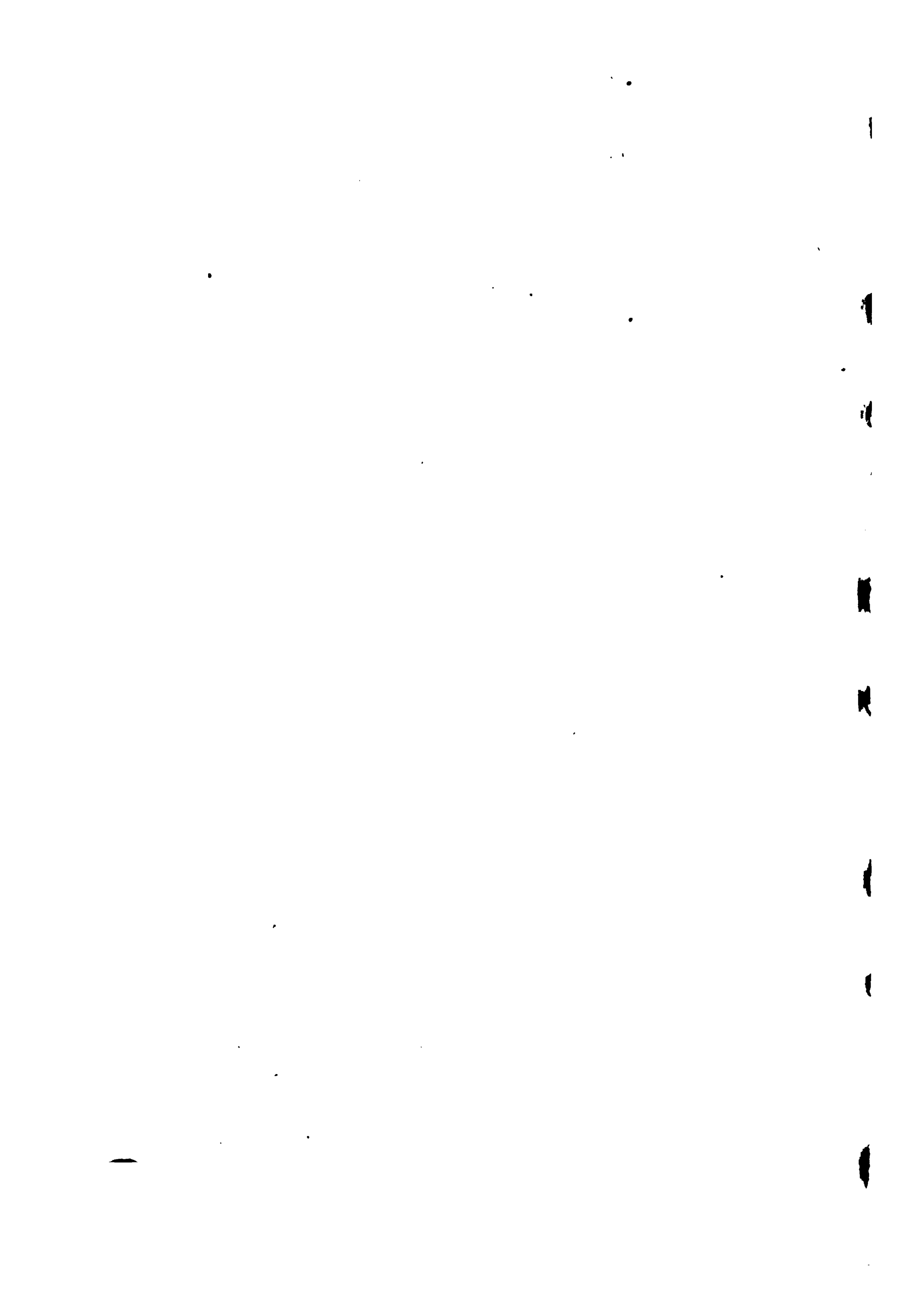
UNIVERSITY
OF MICHIGAN



D
570.
.W95



A POET OF THE AIR



Jack Wright.

A POET OF THE AIR

LETTERS OF JACK MORRIS WRIGHT
FIRST LIEUTENANT
OF THE AMERICAN AVIATION IN FRANCE
APRIL, 1917 - JANUARY, 1918

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1918

Jack Wright.

A POET OF THE AIR

LETTERS OF JACK MORRIS WRIGHT
FIRST LIEUTENANT
OF THE AMERICAN AVIATION IN FRANCE
APRIL, 1917 – JANUARY, 1918

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1918

A POET OF THE AIR

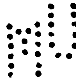
LETTERS OF JACK MORRIS WRIGHT
FIRST LIEUTENANT
OF THE AMERICAN AVIATION IN FRANCE
APRIL, 1917–JANUARY, 1918

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1918

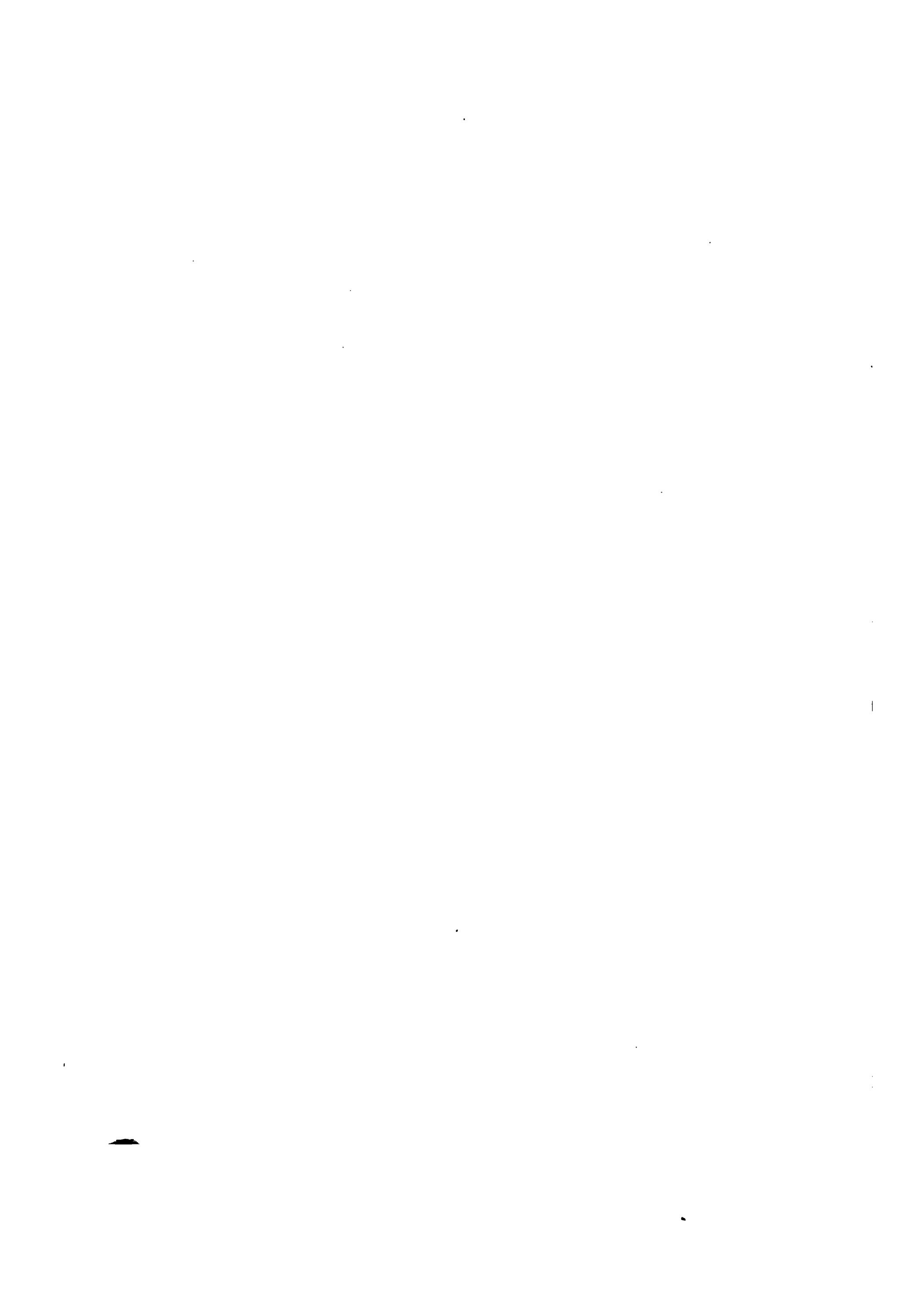
COPYRIGHT, 1918, BY SARA GREENE WISE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published October 1918



THESE PAGES OF WAR ARE DEDICATED
TO THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED MOST
THE MOTHERS AND WIVES



Dr. Margaret Bell
1021-46

01-17-47 DMF

It is my keenest desire and sense of duty to do a little part for France, since it hinders nothing in my daily life but only gives me a bit of manhood.

PREFACE

THESE letters from my son, I gathered for publication just as they came, with the full joy and pride I had in receiving them, hoping to give to other boys something of his fine courage and spirit — to other mothers comfort and hope, and to all readers the vivid, beautiful sketches of France, of War, of Idealism as he, "Poet of the Airs," has given me.

Jack Wright, the author of these letters is an American boy of eighteen years, born in New York City. When a small child he was taken to France, where he remained until the outbreak of the war.

He was educated entirely in French schools; his playmates were the children of the artists and poets of France. French was his language. This will explain his unique literary expression, the curious blend of French and English which, even to the formation of words, I have left entirely as he writes them, feeling therein a special charm.

This will explain also his great love for France, the home of his childhood.

Although but eighteen years old when he left to make the supreme sacrifice as one of the first American Volunteers, he had graduated with special honors from l'École Alsacienne at Paris and Andover in America, and entered Harvard University.

Although only nine months in the war, he had won his commission as First Lieutenant Pilot-Aviator of the American Aviation.

While joyously compiling these letters (having even confided my plan to him) the official telegram came that announced his last flight, January 24, 1918.

But a few days before, these lines of Scott, which he had written on a scrap of paper, fell from one of his books into my hands:—

> "One glorious hour of crowded life
> Is worth an age without a name."

SARA GREENE WISE

FOREWORD

THESE letters are taken directly out of the hurried office of Mars; they are notes on the exact shell-holes *your* man will crouch in, on the precious stars and mighty heavens he will look up to, on War's fight, toil, and divinity; on War's romance and War's exile; on War's New World and the new life it spreads each passing day, to every human proud to have a soul across the Atlantic firmament in the first grasping streaks of dawn.

They are secret notes that Mars held nearest his heart, that were dictated to me on top of blasting mines of which the undersigned stenographer who received Mar's dictation takes an enthusiastic interest in revealing their message to you.

INTRODUCTION

TO-DAY the unusual has become the commonplace. No one can remain deaf to duty's call as it rings its challenge throughout the world. Youth has heard that call and youth has been the first to respond. The superficialities of life have fallen in swift confusion. Luxury and ease no longer allure. The spiritual in human nature has risen supreme and strong above the material that so recently held sway. Youth has caught the vision of the higher values of life and with enthusiasm and unselfish devotion has answered the challenge to protect and establish these values for the youth and manhood of a later day.

Not all have caught this vision with equal clearness. To some it has come sooner than to others. To those who were best fitted to welcome it has been granted the privilege to see it clearest and first. Among these last was Jack Wright, whose pure soul and lofty idealism are so clearly revealed in this collection of his letters.

It was not the love of adventure that prompted this mere boy in years to volunteer for early and active service in the great cause. When the Phillips Academy Ambulance Unit was first suggested in the spring of 1917, Jack Wright was one of the first to ask to go. His intimate knowledge of and love for the French,

with whom he had passed much of his early life, had led him to enter into their great struggle and the spirit of their sacrifice to a degree that few of us have as yet fully attained. "I am sure I can help them," he said to me simply as we discussed the project, "and I owe them so much." And as I said my last "good-byes" and waved my last farewells to that group of eager and expectant American youth as the gray French liner backed slowly away from the New York pier, I was conscious that Jack Wright was the real crusader of them all.

Among his schoolmates Jack Wright was not a prominent figure. His interests and tastes, like those of other poet-warriors now dear to us, were not those most commonly in evidence in American school and college life — so often superficial, so readily shaped by passing, common interests and the popular will. He lived a bit above and beyond the commonplace. He breathed a somewhat purer air; and his poetic nature enabled him to see the higher peaks along life's highway while his mates were still content to view the immediate hills that rose about their pathway. Yet he was far from prudish: and the red blood coursed freely and unalloyed in his veins. His natural literary talents at once evoked the interest and admiration of his instructors; and by those few schoolboy friends whose kindred spirits enabled them to measure him at his true worth he was beloved as few boys are privileged to be.

The Ambulance Service, splendid as the opportunity it offered, proved insufficient for one who had so thoroughly caught the spirit of France in her mortal combat with a cruel and relentless foe and who had so completely dedicated his young life to the great cause of a suffering humanity. By temperament and inclination Jack Wright was well fitted for service in the air; and it was in this branch of the service that he early sought and promptly secured his opportunity to make his full contribution to the common cause and the welfare of the France he loved. In that service, joyful and unafraid, and almost at the moment when as a commissioned officer he was about to take his place on the firing-line itself, he met his glorious death.

The memory and inspiration of such a life and such a death are a priceless heritage to those who still fight the common foe and to those who to-day and in the days of perplexity still to come must continue to fight life's stern battles and answer life's eternal challenge to youth to make realities of its visions and to enthrone above the transient and material the spiritual verities that alone endure. Had Jack Wright lived to be an "Ace of Aces" in the mere destruction of human life he could not have made a greater contribution to the cause to which he had unselfishly devoted himself. By his example he has pointed out to youth its highest goal and by his influence he has helped and will continue to help aspiring youth to persevere and attain. Idealism,

which makes for all that is finest and best in human life, has been glorified and enriched by this brave boy who held and lived true to high ideals and gladly died in their defense.

> "He scarce had need to doff his pride or slough the dross of earth.
> E'en as he trod that day to God so walked he from his birth,
> In simpleness and gentleness and honour and clean mirth."

ALFRED E. STEARNS
Principal of Phillips Academy
Andover, Mass.

A POET OF THE AIR

A POET OF THE AIR

À bord de la Touraine

AU REVOIR, chère maman, vois-tu, me voici déjà français. I can only say a word as the pilot is leaving — stop crying, read a book, work, work, work, and within two weeks you'll feel all right. I don't know why you should n't now, for *I* feel absolutely at home. It's just a trip with sights here and there — no more. A year ago we used to talk lightly of ambulanceers — my being in it cannot augment the importance or the glory or the danger of our former opinions.

We have two wonderful guns aboard, one of which is sixteen inches across the muzzle. Sharpshooters man them. Every one is friendly, and I hear with great enthusiasm that little Red Cross nurses are aboard to tickle our fancies. Ta lettre m'est chère because it is written at a changing point in your life. I notice the change, as I notice all, and am quite satisfied. You have shared the glories of Art — the such must now be re-emplaced by other beauties. You are going through a grand experience — d'envoyer un fils à la guerre — and life is only measured by the weight of its various experiences — the bigger the weight the bigger the life. . . .

Remember to Mr. W. that this letter's sympathies are equally his, though the pilot may refuse me permission to express them silently. I think he understands my

silent gratitude as you do my silent love — at least I hope so.

Bid good-bye and tender wishes to the many complaining ones who will be pestering you for my lack of civility in not bidding them good-bye.

Miss Mack's letter was unforgettable; it contained a background. I shall always be interested in her.

I refuse to send you Godspeed and blessing as every letter I have received has sent me, but I do send you the hope that you'll have your own soul's blessing.

Man's soul is the shrine of religion, you know.

Extremely affectionately, my dear mère

JACK

Read again the poem by Henri Bataille "Mères de France" or "Mères douloureuses." It contains a-plenty for you, and the last line has a ruggedness that is full of Saxon granite.

À bord de la Touraine
6 *May*, 1917

MA BIEN CHÈRE MÈRE: —

This is Sunday. Tuesday morning I expect to land. In other words, there's little time left for torpedoes. Nevertheless many gunners, to the number of thirty, man our guns and scan the horizon; the lifeboats are ready; lights are kept out; extra shells are being fused; mats are being put back of each gun; torpedo boats cruise, invisible, around us; all told, we feel like a chest of gold in Chicago.

This morning I went to a Catholic mass on board and got all mixed up, but the Catholics did too, and the priest had to turn around every while and correct them.

About twenty soldiers are on board going back from leave in America. A number of Fords and some Pathé films of Joffre's American tour complete the cargo. The boys are fun and time is slowly passing by.

The first four days I was sea-sick on account of the storm, but now not a white cap can be seen. Schools of flying fish follow us and dive under the boat.

This P.M. French soldiers are getting up a vaudeville. I mean the priest gets it up — and on Sunday.

Monday

We made 450 fr. at our vaudeville out of 100 spectators, for the benefit of Secours National.

Now all passengers must keep their clothes on until arrival at the river's mouth, and life preservers must always be at hand.

Last night I read a little Verlaine and wrote a couple of bad poems à sa façon. I got up for lunch as usual; it is tout à fait en accord with the height of laziness I am floating in these steamer days. In fact, that's why I wrote poetry last night, as a pill to wake me up for the arrival. The arrival, however, will probably be drizzling and lengthened out to fatigue instead of bathed in sunshine 'neath the happiness of a rich blue sky.

Paris — May 11

I have seen France at Tuesday dawn; and Paris at Tuesday eve. I am just about crazy as we might say. I wander the streets in awe, like a farmer on Broadway, excepting that every two minutes I start shrieking with joy; I can hardly hold myself in; I never fully realized this beauty before — every Frenchman ought to be a genius.

I cannot write now. I can hardly talk. The only people so far seen were the Griziers, a couple of old pupils, my room (for it is a personality), and all were wild to see me.

Remember me to dear Mr. W. and trust in a nearby letter.

Most affectionately

JACK

May 18

DEAREST MOTHER: —

Excuse my tardiness. In the meantime I have been made foreman over a gang of twenty men to construct barracks. I was asked by our chief to go out with our new organization —the Munition Transports that supply the guns — and make sketches for articles to be published in America. I am, with sixteen others, to drive big five-ton Pierce-Arrow trucks.

This P.M. I arrived at the instruction camp twenty miles behind the trenches near where I camped one Easter (with French Boy Scouts). I can detail no more.

The country is wooded and hilly, with the sunlit villages of stone and the sheep and the songs of soldiers. I am now writing in the court of an ancient Charlemagne fort farmyard where rabbits, cats, goats, and a big dog hide and seek around the piles of country, smelling of new-mown hay, and where poilus smoke and argue and sing perched in the notch of an ancient low tower or under the tumbling arch of a door way.

The country is of such a May green and blossoming that war seems impossible and yet every night we can hear the guns and watch the distant rockets.

Good-bye for a moment.

Lovingly

JACK

May 19, 1917

MY DEAR NANA: —

You'll excuse the paper when you know that this note is written from the tower of a mediæval farm, where goats and calves mix with five-ton Pierce-Arrow trucks, spick and span for war.

As you see, and as mother has doubtless told you, I suddenly took a fancy to serve France and came within as quick a time as transportation permitted. Were it not for the warm sun that is baking the rolling hills of the peaceful French country; were it not for such a home-like and slumbering environment, I should scarcely myself be able to believe that within a week I had jumped from the petty world of academic studies to the biggest war nations ever poured their blood into.

After a week in Paris where I awaited my ambulance, I was suddenly sent with a transport section that carries munitions up to the line, so that I should make sketches to be sent to America.

Within three months, though, I will be back to a Ford ambulance unless something else turns up or unless I prefer to remain here.

Twenty boys and two Profs of my school have come with me, so I feel quite at home. But of course I am at home anyway since France means so very much to me. I have always been in Paradise here. I have often been in Hell in America. Then the war is a sight that only a fool or a prisoner would miss.

I consider what I am learning now, worth a year of schooling; although it impedes in no way in that. On the contrary, it gives me my diploma at Andover and gets me into Harvard next year.

At present I am staying at a farm; rather at an instruction camp. Within a week we form up our section and leave for the front.

In Paris I saw a number of friends, but was chiefly occupied in the shopping. That city, of course, still remains unequalled in beauty throughout the world.

For a couple of days I was foreman over twenty men for the building of barracks, etc. Now I am off for three months of steady physical work and expect to become what the war has made of millions of French men and women.

Most lovingly, my Nana

JACK

DEAR MR. W.: —

It may seem queer to you that I have not written you sooner, but my time has been filled to such an extent that I have only been able to write mother, out of all those who expect letters from me.

In Paris I had not even time to see my intimate friends. In the field I have not time even to draw a series of sketches which I have been ordered to do by our chief, for articles to be sent to America.

As you know, I am now running ammunition up to the batteries. The work is that of a man and will probably make men of us all. The group forming our camp is made up of Cornell, Dartmouth, and Andover. The first American flag to float alone over American troops in France is high above us on the trunk of a long pine, and as the worn-out soldiers of France march by they cheer us as saviours. The glory that we are bestowed with is so much that it becomes comical, but nevertheless it does us good to feel ourselves some of the *first American troops.*

As yet we have had no trouble, but any day an aeroplane or some gun fire could settle the matter.

With such surroundings I have become quite a little heathen. I work about a big Pierce-Arrow like a regular chauffeur; I never read a book; I eat war bread and cheese, with guns flashing next to me and while sitting on a truck load of ten thousand pounds of dynamite. It is n't exactly the trigonometry propositions and the little tea parties of Andover or New York. It is still fur-

ther from the entanglements of Broad Street and Wall Street, yet I am so sure that you would have the time of your life here that I cannot understand why you should not take a vacation of six months, see something you'd never believe and go back to work again fully five years younger.

There are pages I could write you about my present life, but neither of us have time for them. I would like to ask you how things are going in New York, but I know that most of your existence there consists of hard work and on that subject I can't converse yet. All I can say is that I hope you will understand that I fully appreciate your regards towards me, and that though I may appear somewhat neglective, now and then, my respect and my sympathies are none less than my appreciation.

Very sincerely

JACK

War Zone of the French Armies
On the Eastern Front
May 25, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER: —

This is not a very sacred place to answer such a sweet letter. I am in a large camp tent with boys singing, sleeping and smoking. Right next door in some fake trenches, Alpine chasseurs are throwing hand-grenades that shake the guts out of you. Overhead the constant purr and buzz of aeroplanes keep up the time of twenty kilometres behind the lines.

Yesterday our trucks pounded along a trip of five

hours or so, during which time I had to drive past rolling field artillery for miles.

We arrived at ——, the first big town since Paris. It is of very Spanish inhabitants so that our one hour there was ringing with merriment and flirtation from us drivers up to our French officers.

In the morning we had target practice. You see with the job I've got now we carry guns and cartridges. The day before yesterday, a brigadier of the section we're bound for was killed by our bombardment while trying to hide himself.

The valley is merry with May sunshine, new leafage, blue sky, Alpine chasseurs, and the mixing of wine and spring songs. Just now I'm waiting to learn when I take my twenty-four-hour leave to Paris from this training camp before leaving for the front.

I have very little time to myself as yet.

June 1

Just back from the leave. We got to Paris at noon. I invaded the coiffeur's. He was on permission too. Then lunch and shopping. A French lady helped me out in the post office and I thereby made her delightful acquaintance. Such things, though, are only a matter of daily event in this Parisian swimming pool.

I had an early dinner at the Café des Lilas where by chance I sat next to a charming girl I had met last night in Paris. She is the beautiful "amie" of an ambulanceer and a very good camarade. Then I walked through the grand Luxembourg Gardens; its terraces where the

artists' models and young family girls just learning to pose stroll carelessly in its caressing atmosphere. I had a "Fraise" at a café just to watch the types walk the "Boul. Miche." . . .

We took the evening train at eight o'clock with high spirits, but low hearts. Then from ten to one o'clock at night we had a truck ride. That, of course, is like riding on artillery wagon seats at full gallop, in the dust of a whole army through the cold of the North Pole. The rest of the night I slept in my bunk without bothering to undo my shoe laces, having been going since four in the morning before, to one that morning, and "some going."

To-day, Friday, we are taking our last day of rest (it's the only one too) before packing bags for a trip unknown. The sun in coming out, brought out the mandolins, and between the two, vague thoughts of yesterday's Paris and a month ago's home, filter through our weariness as the souvenir notes of a song from out the past.

I received quite a love letter from my little unknown girl way down along the twining Doubs river. But hélas! such other things call me with such other forces that my idle, magnetized soul cannot hypnotize myself to going down to see her — though I easily could. . . .

By the way, an adjutant of chasseurs whom I was talking with two days ago is now being buried. You see some hand-grenades went off too soon during practise work and — well, a number of other soldier friends had their faces wiped off at the same time.

I will write you more whenever I get time. You will learn much more, though, of my trip from my diary when I get back, than from the little side notes of those hasty careless letters. With much love,

Your affectionate son

JACK

Give all my best wishes to Mr. W. Remember me to my friends and thank all those who sent me their vague wishes of love with an equal amount of very distant gratitude.

Irwin, the famous "Sat. Eve. Post" war correspondent, visited camp and got some snap shots which I was in. Be on the look out for a write up or photos in that magazine at any time.

The French War Minister had some movies and photographs taken at our instruction camp, which I was also in. They will be exhibited in America.

Remember that I am in the "Transport Munitions" by five-ton Pierce-Arrow trucks, that I have a gun and that I am one of the first thirty American soldiers in France.

I am not in the ambulance now. Later I will change over to the ambulance to see that side too.

June 4, 1918

MY DEAR HARRISON: [Classmate at Phillips Academy, Andover.]

How can I write you all that I have to say! I cannot; so I shan't. Just accept with a conventional

smile a much conventional letter, concerning my present health my present satisfaction with the world and all my other little presents.

This letter will reach you after the term and the "exams" are over. I know it was mean of me to leave you up on the hill, but after trying to persuade you that you *could* come, my selfishness told me I had done my duty and that self-sacrifice was but a dream-vision of Youth, unpractical in the life of business-like reality which the world is made of.

. . . Were I to tell you of my return to France, the first sight of her shores in the blue light of early morn; were I to tell you of the return to Paris, the actual vision of what I had contemplated but as an unrealizable dream; were I to tell you of my life in Paris, the heart of the city and the beloved wonderful girls you meet; were I to tell you of passing out of the gates of Paris into the arms of France's peaceful country land in the uniform of "one of them"; were I to tell you of the first thundering crash of a shell, the faint smell of battle and the distant incense of a gigantic spirit of the "Marseillaise" fighting for Victory; were I to tell you all that I have seen, felt, gone through, experienced in my first one and a half months of adventure, I would be writing in one letter the wonders of the "Divine Comedy," of Boccaccio's "Sonnets," of Verlaine and Gibson and the unspelled poetry of Paradise itself. See, then, why I refuse to write, why I shall only scribble, not even describe or even give you the notes of my diary. Some day you will hear me talk of it. Some day you will read

my diary; some day you will live a while in the land where I came to walk a moment with my soul and then you shall think that for one vague dream second you shall have caught a glimpse of what my heart's Paradise is — a glimpse only, though; an unperfumed, unfelt glimpse.

But why rave on so blundersomely? Listen! Troops are passing, ranks of blue-clad, helmeted troops of France! Their bugles clash in the morning, and I stand with awe as they march towards the nearby woods from which the smoke of shells is rising. See! to my left a peaceful little lake, a primitive rowboat and white oxen lying in the high grass just beyond; between the trees the stone walls of the château are baking in the sun, and underneath the trees a nurse, all in white and very silent, passes along the garden path. That, then, is my present life and of that only dare I give you the most microscopic aspect.

I am driving a five-ton Pierce-Arrow truck these days instead of a Ford, and hauling thousands of pounds of death up to batteries, instead of bringing back the dying. I am doing something positive — not negative. At the same time I am making sketches of this first unit of American soldiers for magazines and books of propaganda in America. It is an order for which I am not paid, but which I willingly accept.

We are the first American soldiers in France, inasmuch as we carry rifles and are a part of the war machine, ready for fight and defense and prison camps, all of which the ambulance is not. Other colleges are join-

ing us week on week and soon we shall be quite a regiment.

I can tell you nothing of my trip; it is too great. You see I am in Paradise, That's all I can say.

Bien à toi, mon ami

JACK

Until July 28 my address is
T.M. 527
par B.C.M.
Paris
Convois automobiles
Section Américaine

June 7

MY DEAR DICK: —

Excuse all, — paper, wit, and brévité, — for I am at war — at least I am vaguely concerned with it. You see I have written to no one but mother. What I am doing takes up all my energy and strength; it consists of driving a five-ton Pierce-Arrow truck full of five more tons of ammunition up to the batteries on the firing line. I am on a trip of adventure and am therefore rushed with new adventure every minute of my life. As a result, I am becoming more as ye ancient adventurer who rode the moonlit highways long ago with a rapier by his side and a swear-word for a bible. I have become rash, indifferent, brutal, and impatient. I never touch my pen or my pencil. I never woo nor pine: I just take; I never drive: I race; I never stand still: I am in action; I never think or dream: I just do.

It is a life I had thought unrealizable in such modern times, but I have found out that war brings with it all

the barbarism of the past and the wars gone by that had lain in a grave during peace time.

Paris is for me a Babylon and the country of France is for me a plain overflowing with the fever of the Huns; the incense of bursting shells and smoking powder.

In Paris I am sought after as a hero. In the country I seek after and find. The firing lines are awful and it takes all the grit you've got to stand them. You must be ready for Hell as well as Paradise when you come here, but if you do come, you'll find them both, and at their highest pitch. I sincerely hope you do come and honestly believe you will. I want you with me very much, for your influence helps me and gives me a laugh to work and woo with. In fact you would be a great companion for my present six months of adventure, and you would perhaps help me formulate and accompany me in carrying out of vague desires for wandering and further adventure beyond the distant horizon line.

I am deeply lured by service at Salonica, by working my way down to the mystic, templed shores of uncomprehensible India and into the flowery, mediæval heart of Japan where the peasants wear ancient costumes and the Oriental women have weird and fascinating ways of flirtation. I want to watch the brown-skinned Grecian women bathe by Salonica's waters. I want to hear the Hindoo priestesses sing 'midst the clouds of incense; I want to hold an Oriental geisha in my young American arms.

Are you coming, then?

Are you coming with me?

Or will you spend your years of youth and adventure in conventional America that any one can see at any time?

With my best wishes to you in any case, and my fondest love to your dear mother, —

Je te serre la patte

JACK

June 11, 1918

MY DEAR NANA: —

You see I am writing you on your birthday. Perhaps you'll never see the letter, but nevertheless I write. I could write of everything under God's sweet sky and yet only be telling you fifty per cent of what I've done and gone through.

I've been under shell-fire; drank wine in dug-outs, fired cannons, walked the connecting trenches, raced round Paris, seen aeroplanes fall to their death, heard the wounded cry . . .

Milked a cow from the German trenches, been in German officers' headquarters, driven trucks, Fords, officers' cars, donkeys; sketched, written and felt blue and more than anything else, as always — I've dreamed . . .

Just as this moment I am smelling roses in an English pasture, thinking of having tea with the nurses in the château.

Love

JACK

July 1

My very dear Mother: —

Your last letters quite discouraged me, for I have written you on an average of once a week since I left America, telling you of some of the incidents around my new life; telling you of the success we are having with the newspapers and movie men and what Paris and French country have meant to me.

However, if boats lose mail, one must not fret in their cozy corner, but simply remember that whatever small ills one may happen to have, they are totally unproportional and immeasurable with these horrible tragedies that sweep down from the most northern point of Russia to the most southern point of Africa.

I hope that you will at least receive half my letters, for I can understand your worry. As long as you have not got the little chain-bracelet I wear on the hand now writing you, do not worry.

War is reduced for me now to the trenches and the air. Outside of that I have become so habituated to the steady flow of ammunition wagons, reserve troops and troops on leave that I pay no more attention to their wondrous system that back up the front line than I would pay to the traffic in New York. In fact, it is aggravating to always be "just behind" the action. You are practically as sure as though driving along the roads of Massachusetts, if not safer. The ambulance risks a little more. However, the other day towards dusk, while approaching Château Soupir, a fairy shell con-

struction on which Calmet spent millions, as we were nearing the ridge behind which desperate fighting was taking place, a smoke as that of a bonfire puffed up thirty yards to our starboard. I wondered where the gypsies were, when a crackling of timber made it dawn upon me that the smoke was that of a Boche "seventy-seven" digging a rain-hole for horses to drink out of. About twenty-five seconds after it was over I remembered that once upon a time a Frenchman had told me to lie down so I squatted behind the dasher; some fifty seconds still later, I realized; things becoming clearer and clearer that it was all over. I looked ahead. Instead of speeding up, the cars had all slowed down and we were waiting for another explosion, with our vest pockets set.

The rest of the night, as every night, I had plenty of amusements: wine in officers' dug-outs, joking with soldiers, visiting batteries, going through the château in spite of "Défense d'entrer — Quartiers Généraux" — learning how things were really done and why, and what the ways of war sent out to me in their silent, indifferent messages. I also walked through a connecting trench for the first time up to the little fort of a "seventy-five." The French call the connecting trenches "boyaux," or "guts," if translated, because of their zig-zag course to avert fire.

That is a night on the camions, but I am tired of it now — the novelty wears off — one needs new adventures or else absolute peace, work and time to think.

These last three days, not having been out and being

inspired by the continual chilling sleet, the echoes of German attacks thirteen kilometres over the hills and the gigantic English pasture which spreads out in front of me and the chateau here, I have been writing a poem which means late hours.

Now I have obtained a trailer to live in, instead of the barracks, claiming that I needed a studio. A trailer is a cabin on wheels. I chose a fine chap to come down and help me fix it up for us both and so each day we take expeditions around the famous hunting country of France in hunt of flowers for our cabin and flowers for our hearts — the latter is not lacking, thanks to my vest pocket.

The last time my curiosity led me into a charming summer villa where three exquisite Parisiennes were smiling and perfuming away the summer-time, one of them being in love with an aviator who comes to kiss her each morning in his aero before risking his life over the lines. Oh! war as nothing else brings you back to the adventurous times of old.

God bless those who linger in America, for they are brave not to drop all business and tea parties for the inhuman events in France. In fact, if they knew what they were missing, they would.

It is not that you see so much, but that from details here and there, from atmosphere and contact with things and heroes you soon learn to feel what you had already read of in legends as that which was forever entombed in the past.

We have a number of artists in camp amongst whom

is the decorator Lepeltier, who has a big bunch of studios near the Madeleine. His designs are used as standards on the Louis XIII, XIV, XV, and XVI periods, in the art schools of America. He's a good chap and we're quite chummy.

I found that all out, otherwise I'd have never known, for the main thing of war is that you all meet without knowledge of your respective positions.

I've found a singer who sang with Caruso at the Metropolitan, who carries lumber at our main loading base, and many such as he run across my path. I, too, to them am only a poilu — not even that, for I have not seen the trenches. I am almost an "embusqué," so safe is my job.

Our captain here is a good chap and intelligent — at least well "instruit." We often talk together. It is funny to see how all the dainty French officers up to the Colonels included have been suddenly shifted to little one-horse Fords by the Government.

You speak of dying of ennui in the country — mon Dieu, I remained three years at Andover. If you are bored with life, it's your own fault. Ah, well, I must talk to you to prove it, so don't expect a solution here, but just take it for granted and get in the country and think, think, think, from 7 A.M. to 12 P.M.; exercise and eat — then go to bed and sleep. When you get back to the city again, you'll wonder you could ever have been like the thousands of fluttering birds that dabble with a little work some three or four hours each morning and then gabble away the rest of the day. Just suppose you

had Mr. W.'s shoes on for a day. Ye gods, would n't it just be too dreadful for words! Yet he grinds in and out the three hundred and sixty-five days of each year and that year in, year out.

Six of our section of forty have been sent to Meaux to become Second Lieutenants. If I stick with the service a few more months, I'll get there too, but I have further plans in view. Just remember that your son is now a rank adventurer, that is to say, with plenty of adventures but little danger, so do not worry. Just accept my letters tranquilly, and if you do so, you shall learn all and each thing that I do.

Now I will take a walk over the hill to the town built into, in, under and over a cliff. Some friends are there and we'll have tea; on the way back I'll pick some flowers. The wheat fields are sprinkled with the blue (bluets), the white marguerites and the red poppies. A barrage fire has been raging over the other hills during the past three days of rain — it sounds like approaching the lions' cages of the zoo.

Affectionately

JACK

DEAREST MOTHER: —

Your letters are awfully good, way off from home. It's awfully nice of you to write me so thoroughly and kindly every once a week. They're just like cake and ice cream, not forgetting the chocolate nut sauce, over here in the war-dried land. You know we can't get a single luxury in the war zone outside of some coarse

chocolate. We do get jam, three times a day, so we don't eat it much between meals. The cigarettes would kill an ordinary horse, but we quite enjoy them; in fact the Fatimas that used to be too strong in the States are sickeningly weak over here.

I've spent an hour writing twelve little pages in my diary about yesterday. You will really learn more of my trip when I get home. Now I can hardly find time to tell you of my health and send a few material facts and incidents without the least of description or sentiment.

Yesterday I left the park where we were unloading a mile behind the trenches, and though the noise of the batteries was a little dizzying, I made my way to one of them — a "hundred and five." The artillery men got me behind a tree, a whistle blew, and the whole world was lightning. Well, after the cloudburst, I straightened my disjointed features and immediately began to inquire just how often the Germans popped at them and just how often they were popped. They laughed at me — told me their job was a cinch; that only three men had been killed that week so far, and that an hour or so ago the first shells of the day exploded some forty yards off. I wanted to retreat, but then the ridge ahead of me let out such an explosion I thought the whole thing was blown up. It was the "seventy-fives" on top, opening fire — and what a fire! Balls of lightning leapt from muzzle to muzzle and clouds of red flame burst upwards as they sent Hell screeching through the air as actually and deadly as man could invent.

This war is all electric operation, explosions, death

— all, and that is what fills you with fear — a fear of electricity, of the unknown and omnipotent.

Then some strings of light-balls floated up like champagne bubbles, so to call aeroplanes back; rockets signalled the guns, star shells made the night day for two miles around.

I had always wanted to go in the trenches some quiet period for just a little visit. I had thought it a curiosity. Now I no longer shall think about playing with death. Death means a lot when you talk about it while leaning with one hand on the muzzle of a five-inch gun and stopping up your ears with the other.

My greatest attainment so far on this trip has been to arrive at understanding the French poilus. At first I admired them, then I grew tired of them and was even disgusted at them. Since last night, though, I have been able to understand them, to feel myself their comrade, and to know that each common one is such a hero as I may never be.

I landed back at camp at three, having started out at three. I went to bed feeling that I could face a New York gang of gunmen as though catching butterflies, after what I had heard that night, that very quiet night as the Frenchmen say, when no one ever has worries as long as they be safe with the heavy artillery.

We have now the cutest blue overalls — or uniforms, rather — that is a mixture between pajamas and a sailor's suit. It's awfully cool and most of the French army wear them. It's roasting hot over here so we get a swim nearby every two days.

Every other day we get orders to take our camions (trucks) out for ten to twelve hours.

The other night we tried to have a fight between the sections, just to stir up the stagnancy of camp life, but even that died down, so I talked the evening away.

I discovered some French poetry in camp and also a picture of myself and others that came out in the Boston Sunday Herald about the first half of May.

I can send no more postcards from the war zone. The Captain has forbidden it. But I will write as much as time allows. You see, even on rest days, we are kept busy.

Pershing was received as a victorious Roman general. We expect him ourselves soon.

Give my love to every one and remember me especially to Mr. W.

I am your devoted son

JACK

Western Front

July 9, 1917

MY VERY DEAR LADY OF THE PEACEFUL LAND: —

Your letters have a ceaseless charm: they bring me all the warm luxury and love from my little circle back in America. Your letters frame the twirl of events and persons that are dear to me in a homelike atmosphere that is sweet in this world of war and that mingles harmoniously with the souvenirs of yonder that now and then pass over the wheat and poppy fields 'midst veils and fairy wings.

Each day I realize — with little help from my imagination, with little influence from brass button uniforms (they're not very bright in the mud and danger of front life) — I realize that then my present service of truck-driver not only contains faults such as you would expect in any hardship wearing service, but is lacking in some factors that are fundamental, if one chooses that war is better than peace for the education of one's youth.

The service has much monotony. It is entirely monotonous, for your events are but a repetition of themselves. You are a work horse pulling a load of stones over the same road each day, with, for a horizon of hope or a world of beauty, the ugly back of the stone cart in front of you.

This service is an illusion that cultivates false vanity in the hearts of the weak and shame in the hearts of the strong. You think that because you wear a uniform and now and then carry shells for some one else to fire, you are participating in the war. You are not. What you are doing is a participation in the system that prepares material for other men to wage war with. You are not in the war any more than the scene-shifter is on the stage. One is the actor and sometimes the matinée idol; the other is the scene-shifter or the page. Both wear uniforms, though, and both uniforms pertain to the theatre and are connected with the stage.

We pass as bus-drivers, coal-haulers, with our convois of automobiles, such as you would see around factories and mines and which you would consider so, were they not on French soil instead of American.

At the same time that our jangling trucks roll around through villages animated with soldiers of France or country resorts, where tender lips await the hero's return, at the same time out of our reach but all around us, blow the bugles of the men of the day, clap and flap the banners of France and Freedom.

War's great caldron of heroism, praise, glory, poetry, music, brains, energy, flashes and glows, rustles and roars, fills the heavens with its mighty being — its world far off from ours, rushing fast and faster around us, while yet we ceaselessly roll as many a month ago, in the dust of the same roads, puffing over bumps and hills the same loads undeserving to even think what the life of a warrior is. We are not even feeling war, for the heart of it beats in blood; not even breathing it, for the soul of it exhales in the high-up clouds of gold.

Illusioned by a sense of false service, false bearing of war burdens, we think ourselves inspired; think ourselves worthy to live in France, and day in, week out we pass as newly rich bourgeois in the rich studio of warfare. We dabble with its greatness, mimicizing the most gigantic drama of the world's history — the final struggle between democracy and autocracy, as some society girl would gabble her criticism of Victor Hugo — finding him generally too exaltant or too chaotic.

The service dawns to me more and more with the glimmering of but a pale green moon 'midst a world of stars, zephyrs and gigantic oaks. You see, when one has drunk with the men in war gray-blue, whose faces under the glinting steel of their helmets have been heroi-

cally stamped with the conglomeration of Hell, called the trenches; when you hear these big-pulsed volunteers of Freedom talk of the hearts and honors that await them, and that, feeling really worthy of such returns, will really enjoy them; when you have seen men wind their way, singing the "Marseillaise," toward the land of death, while you bump around on a seat of a bulky truck, nearing the front but by night, sharing none of the danger and none of the bravery, it is only natural that you should feel as Frenchmen call chauffeurs of my age —"embusqué."

What right have I to dress up in a stylish khaki uniform, buttoned and belted and parade, the gauntlet of wondrous eyes? Why the important air with which I pass down the boulevards of Paris, scorning civilians, seeking praise? I have no right to even the muddy coat of a poilu. I should be shining his shoes, instead of tossing a tip with a snobby air to the bellboy who shines my boots at the Continental. Perhaps I'm not quite as bad, but when I've seen the suffering I've seen, I feel that way. Why, I don't feel at home even to talk to the least flower girl in Paris. I shirk to accept the open-hearted hospitality of a poilu.

I have no right to the comradeship of men who put no price to their lives or at least who have the grit to stand up for some god or other. If a man can't come over here to fight, he has no right to share with the fighters — to enjoy the beauty of a land that's waging war — to seek the sympathy of women in mourning. I should return immediately to America and forget that I had

made such a bad attempt at giving a hand to a friend, or else remain in France and stick by her blood and bone. That's what a dog can do — why can't I? Why should n't I?

This service is the lowest form of warfare. It consists of treading as an elephant 'midst the gardens of Allah. We bang down a dusty, clouded road, 'midst grease and oil, with loads of timber and shells, to a park a mile or two behind danger, and roll back to camp in the drizzle and sleet of half night, half morning, to sleep. Then we eat — that is quite an event; then we clean cars or carry out some orders meant to keep us busy, or else we loaf all day and all evening, and some of the night we gape up at the infinite heavens — not there to find a ray of glory, thanking us from on high, but to ponder over just how the weather will be next day.

In front of a wheel that needs hardly to be turned, we sit for hours as a china dog, gulping in dust and bouncing over long roads in the dream that we are doing our duty to humanity; that we are paying back the debt we owe our ancestors who bought our freedom at the price of their lives, ambitions, ideals, and what else their souls were set on.

Again, it's the lowest form of warfare: we are the snail crawling slowly, heavily all day long in mud and in the far distant echo of bugles, fire, charges, medals, praise . . .

This service is most occupied with inaction; now and then only does it wake up, but only an awakening to sleep, for truck-driving soon becomes deaf and dumb

slumber. Either one should stay in peaceful America and cast the war far from his luxurious couches or one should fully swell his breast proudly, patriotically, under a fighter's coat of mail and enter one's self entirely into the deepest of war's depths and the highest of its heights; never to vainly, hypnotized look on at others fight, concealed in the bushes, wrapped in a velvet cloak, clinking a ballroom rapier. Why, I don't even know how to walk in my uniform. It is more than I am.

No in-between can exist in the world if one wishes to avert the horror of becoming a living dead. Everything must be idealistic.

Idealism is extremes. If one desires to get the most out of the biggest God gave to get, one must plunge into it to the end of its extremes.

Shall it be Peace or War?

Shall it be Bourgeoisie or Romance?

Shall you learn life and learn to appreciate it to its fullest or shall you not?

This service is a bluff any way you turn. Service, danger, heroism, praise, glory — all that war contains it mimics. It makes a bluff and makes you bluff. You are here in a world of grandeur, wonder, miracles and with men that make them, and yet you are not "one of them."

To be out of a crowd, to belong to no "frat," to have no comrade, brother, to be a hermit, unmystic, unnoticed, un-anything, is a feeling no human can stand. As it is now, I am not "one of them."

The widow in mourning asks me if I have been

"with them"; the café girl washes away her paint as she hears the soldiers are coming back and asks me if I am "one of them." The little boy takes me joyfully by the hand, for he thinks something of me, and pointing to his father's grave says, "It seems you are 'one of them.'"

You can only be worthy of France's friendship and feel yourself intimately connected with the heroes (who are the people of your daily contact); and how else could you wish to be connected with them; you can only feel yourself "one of them" by doing, offering, taking even as they are; otherwise, is one to take the tinsel-tassel before the eyes of all, of a carpet-knight amongst women, a tourist amongst countries and men? An optimist onlooker to the accomplishments of working humans? . . .

Why do I think my heart beating in time with the heart of France? Just because I'm here? Why do I put my hands in the hands of these brave peoples — where are my rights, my password, my papers? The few shells I've seen — why the "poilus" call them a bore.

If one intends to live, he must reap what life spreads out to him. A man lives in the true sense of the word, proportionately to the inspiration he derives from nature and events. All other life is but ephemeral, sensual pleasure. If, then, you are to live, you must live not in lukewarmness, for its inspiration is despicable, worse than criminal; it is Flaubert's everlasting enemy — Bourgeoisie; not then in an "in-between" but in the

extreme, which Idealism and the highest of life commands.

Extreme demands extreme in every way, thought and action; dreams and accomplishments. Then I must live to the extreme of life's following steps: —

1. Childhood — impressions — discovery — foolishness.
2. Youth — adventure, romance, preparation for manhood.
3. Manhood — grand amour (since love is the greatest in life — even greater than Art).

   Home — wife — children.
4. Old age — brain pleasure.

Here, then, is my philosophy: That since I choose to live life as an Idealist, each one of the aforesaid steps must be lived to the utmost possible, for the benefit of those following me and the delight of my soul.

If I die in the fulfilling of one of the steps, what remains of pleasure in life will cause me no regret, for unto ashes shall I be returned. If not, "tant mieux!"

Two propositions seem to object: —

1. That my decision is egotistical — yet if every man thought of the pleasure and beauty in life, wars would cease; men would rise intellectually and the world morally.
2. That my decision is inconsiderate of those nearest to me — yet I was not asked whether I wanted to come into life — why then should I ask others whether I could leave it or not? Besides, the greatest treasure a man has is his life — no other

person should propose to himself a claim on it.
I have my own life to live — may it be done
worthily.

You see, dear mother, I am in a very curious world — on a very queer planet. One does no work, yet somehow life is much larger. The past — the grumbling civilization I left behind me has become but a collection of trifling memories. That is why such queer ideas come to me. Perhaps they are all wrong; if so, please do tell me, but do not forget to tell me why.

Most devotedly and appreciatively, I await impatiently your answering letter.

JACK

14 *July*, 1917

MY DEAR MOTHER: —

Doubtless on such a day as this I should write in eloquent words an international philosophy, seeing that this is usually considered a world-wide fête.

The mondial horizon of this day, as far as I have seen, has been under my "trailer" the first half of the day, and under the car, the last half. I almost stayed under my trailer (that's my house), for the whole thing got tired of standing up on its wheels and came down to take a rest on my back.

Please start to understand things. When I left America I thought I was a hero. I now consider myself a shirker and a fool. In America, you see us under shell-fire from the time we get up. Please see it as it is. A shell once a month and the rest either running these

busses along some road with about as much excitement as running a trolley car — only that there are not as many stops — or writing poetry in a little peasant village.

This work is not that of a man full of the blood of youth, with inspiration and with ideals. This was made for the lowest type of man — not even the chauffeur, but the peasant. It is a peasant-like, animal toil. Not that I mind the work and the fatigue, but that I mind doing it for so little positive result. If an intellectual man comes over here to help France, he should help her, if he has any patriotism, not with arms and legs, but with his brains. Is there anything more dramatic than to let go to waste the most vital factor of modern warfare — the spirit and energy of Youth? Is there anything more dramatic than to hold in, any small promise of grandeur in a human? It is the bourgeois parent quenching the spark of Art in the child; the New England mother forbidding her son to leave the farm and expand himself. It is weighing down a fellow by the neck by putting his red-blooded vitality to driving trucks instead of driving for positive results and victory, side by side with the other boys who are expanding their young souls as the beauty of youth requires and the breed of their nation demands.

If there is a factory of beauty in the world, nothing could be more bourgeois than to hold it down; nothing could be more criminal than to hinder its perfecting itself.

Is there any more glorious factory of beauty in the

world than the fiery, soaring, impressioned, enjoying spirit of Youth? No. Then let its wings take wind and fly. Let them spread on their tornado and fly their highest! It will be something for the world to look up to, and the world lives in divinity but by the things it looks up to, or can sometimes — rare times, fully attain.

A statue, a picture can never be perfectioned enough, so, at least, develop it to the fullest, if it is to be something big — a monument, a factor in the world.

Please consider the mixture of facts and philosophy that I am giving you in these letters, without indifference and without pessimism. Do not, when reading this, see the world as wholly made up of elder ones, but know that there is another half to it, and a very big one. Look over carefully the steps in life I marked out in my last letter. I have made them a plan to follow for myself (if it be my good fortune to attain them) and I want to feel sure that you agree.

I always consider you very much, mother, but more than you, more than myself, must I be true to the Idealism of the world. *That is the greatest god to obey and the greatest religion to be loyal to.* More than patriotism, more than home, more than church, does the philosophy which makes man's life beautiful, strong and divine demand self-sacrifice and loyalty. Mother, inasmuch as it is so high, our human customs and trifling attachments must be unconsidered, our human desires must be sacrificed. In so doing, if there be need, I can see nothing of mourning in the joy of such a divine light

and the height of such inspiration. If the Idealism of life in its fulfillment and perfectionment demand that I give up my life for it, mother, your soul should be so filled with the grandeur of it that the smile of the gods should dawn across a heart where human tears were meant.

If I could give my life to make a bit of Idealism perfect itself and live immortal on a mortal world, it would be the highest hope I could attain and the greatest happiness I could enjoy. If I were to live lukewarmly and die weakly, it would be the greatest tragedy I or any human could suffer.

I am only telling you this because I feel assured that you can rise to the appreciation of it. I do not ask you to live to it — just to appreciate it and in the future to sympathize with it as you have so far kindly accepted it in the past. Just as a Roman would be true to his Rome, a Catholic to his God, I hope that you will not fret at my being true to it — the modern religion.

You will remember my poem "Crepusculum Sacrum" ("Man's Soul is the Shrine of Religion").

In following out of a philosophy in life, I would not be doing it through weakness, as when J. J. Rousseau said, "Man must have a god to worship"; but I am following it out that my life may be a unit, a factor, a piece, of something while yet it is and not dwindled away unlived, unremembered . . .

Most affectionately, as ever

JACK

Western Front
20 *July*, 1917

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER: —

The letter you sent June 25th has greatly impressed me. Although in the midst of much joy it brought back souvenirs of America and New London with the most vivid colors. That you should meet those with whom I held delightful friendship and who were factors in the most perfect summer I have yet passed, is a great joy to me now that I am one year, three thousand miles away from them, and far from the pleasant smiles along the sunny beach or the cool night rides — far isolated from them in a world of much suffering and of much sorrow.

But this is not entirely grief — grief is but a half of my new world. As deep as grief lies buried on the one side, so much higher does joy contrast on the other. However, it is not the joy of the summer resort — it is the gay little peasant street or the flowing gowns and naughty eyes that pass beneath the Paris boulevard trees, or yet the hoarse singing of soldiers behind the lines covered with mud and fatigue, but finding in the twinkling red wine distraction from horrors men have never witnessed. That is joy indeed; but it is such a foreign joy to me that your letters still bring me the childish sting of homesickness.

Your letter also thrilled me — the initiative power you take with you never fails wherever you go. You seem an Indian Prince travelling with his entire court

of gallants, artisans, and officers; wherever you land a world of art takes birth, and were it in the midst of Sahara, tribes would soon be wending their camels towards the shrine of new life, so mysteriously sprung in their dry country. Though you may lack in certain qualities — which would indeed be contrary to your part of a woman — you always have a self-made environment of art, happiness, and movement that must forcibly make the world one lovely garden for you and surely attract others with its magnetism. Nothing could attract more: Art, happiness, movement.

Yesterday evening I received orders that my permission came to-day. Little would be the amount of whooping and jumping stunts you have seen me go through, compared to those I carried out then. A bath followed immediately. Finally, when much pacified again, I strolled through the little village streets with much the same impression I had upon leaving school.

The houses and walls of vine-sprinkled stone, huddled together in the evening as a big herd of sheep in the pasture of hills surrounding. Over the gray masses and through the evening sky one long streak of yellow was closing the day. Entering the winding main street, I passed groups of men in blue tiredly talking their hours of rest away. Now and then I found a few peasant girls with their old mothers around a doorstep and knowing them, bade them "Bonsoir, Mesdames."

All along the street of many stage-settings, men and women were at peace, sometimes laughing; more often just reposing far from the land of war.

I was not coming back again to drive trucks along these dusty roads. I would never seek adventure in these hollyhock gardens again. I would no longer buy cigarettes from Madame or "petits gâteaux" from Mademoiselle. The monotonous village of before became a place of slumber and rest as one big, sweet, reposing grave into which one could always enter weary-worn and afterwards leave with new strength. Of my little village and the two months I had spent there, I was entirely satisfied and betook myself contentedly to bed. "Good-bye, Little Village."

Next morning

This morning, before any one else, I arose in the snappy chill, breathed in the fragrance of a thousand trees and awoke to the dawn of a day of supreme joy. Everything became new. I was to go back to Paris. This time I was one of her soldiers — one who had been to the front; one who felt somewhat, although not entirely, entitled to the pleasure rivers of her happy capitol. I had set off for school vacations before with more or less of an idea for a good time, but this time life's pleasures seemed precise and vivid. I felt my Youth stronger than the adolescence of school days. I knew more of what life was — a great deal more — and I was going back to the joyful city of the French, more than ever prepared to find my pleasures definitely; to weigh them to their exact proportion; to feel them contrast with the toil of a nobler sort than study, and more than all to get them and live them by myself, for myself, with

the constant knowledge that I was more of a man, and that I had at last worthied myself to gain self-reliance and independence.

My first "séjour à Paris" was exceedingly joyful. It was the return to my first love. But then I put on the uniform — immediately I entered upon a new life and found in my first love a new heart — one that loved me more for greater reasons and one that in return I cherished with a deeper sympathy, for, you see, we were both at war together.

My second séjour, then, was my first permission. As I told you, I felt quite elated to say to my friends, "Oui, en permission."

This is my third séjour. It is really my first permission, for in time, red tape, and the rest, it is truly military. It is also my first return to Babylon from the field of dashing armies — in other words, as we say in 1917, "I have been at the front."

My fourth séjour will be still more joyful, though, for it will be a return to rise higher in the hearts of those I love. Wait! . . .

My fifth séjour will be almost glorious. I will be between the mountain peak and the sky.

My sixth séjour and fifth permission *will* be glorious if it comes, for I will have attained the sky.

Tell me, many details, dear stenographer, of those you meet at N. Tell me especially about H., for although there are roses of many lands, I never forget those who, in any way, have been tangent to my heart.

Tell me a great deal about her. She won't have much

to say — it was n't for that I liked her, but she's always H., so remember me enthusiastically to her.

Tell Dick he'd better come over here before I go fetch him — that if the submarines don't duck him, I will, for he's a naughty boy to remain so far away from the world that's the only one for him.

I have made, varnished, bullet-tipped, and painted myself a curious cane indeed. The decorations on the handle are paintings of an Indian girl and a Russian princess — one each side — the Far West and the Far East; so that when my hand takes hold of it I can flatter myself by repeating: —

> "For East is East and West is West,
> And never the twain shall meet,
> But in the mighty hand of God . . ."

I'd make some cute, little god, now, would n't I?

Most affectionately, I am very lovingly

JACK

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER: —

I am now on permission in Paris and many adventures are whirling around the May pole of my youth: meeting Carlos, walks with Bourdelle, and much else of much excitement, but much as that much may seem, it is nothing compared with what I have to tell you.

I have just taken the biggest step of my life — not through bewilderment nor through morbidness, but coolly and decidedly, obeying to a call that for me dominates all the world and its many voices. Inasmuch as it has taken the best in me, it must necessarily

take the best in you, and I only hope that now that the challenge rings out, the love and inspiration you have had in me for eighteen years shall not shrink before a greater test and a greater source of their being.

I have joined the Aviation!

This has been no sudden gush of romanticism nor no ceding to influence. It has been the result of serious and hard thinking. I have not treated the matter lightly and claim a firm decision to stick to my choice. Just as you are starting to worry now, have I worried for the past three weeks, every day and every night. I have solved problems of philosophy. I have weighed material facts; I have listened to inspirations; I have taken in my surroundings, considered the past, present, and future, and now that the "calcul" is done and the time to draw up the results of three weeks of steady thought has come, I am firm and happy to enlist myself even to the last drop of my energy in the glorious defense of France and Democracy.

There are many reasons for my new action outside of such allurement as glory and prestige. I have told you, though, most of them: the choice between America and peace or France and war; the desire to be "one of them" over here and to feel fully worthy of France's beauty and her people's sympathy; the desire to be able to say with pride that I have done something real in the greatest of all struggles; the horror of shirking when boys like me are dying; the thousand and one other minor reasons that turn by turn assail me stronger and harder day by day as I remain in the new world of Europe.

There are two dominant reasons, however: the first is a law; the second, a call.

As you understand, a life without a philosophy and an ideal is worthless. From my first age of understanding, I have given my body and soul to the worship of an ideal. It is what has made me. In my letter some days ago, I gave you my philosophy of life — that is what I consider the necessary system of living so that life may be lived to its greatest and highest God made possible for Man. Inasmuch as I am Idealist, it is my duty to obey the law of extremes and live each step of my life to its very extreme. That and that only can make the some little spark of divinity in my human existence that every man strives for. That is the first reason. I must obey the law laid down by the philosophy of my life. No lukewarmness can be tolerated. The chef-d'œuvre must be perfect and man's chef-d'œuvre is always his life. It is his living Art, his breathing statue — the greatest work he leaves behind him.

The second dominating reason is a call: So far there has been a soldier-poet, a poet of the woods, a poet of all, but as yet there has been no poet of the airs — the wonderlands unknown, unfelt, unseen, but ever worshipped as God's own grounds, or as the symbol of the highest soarings of men. Nor, as yet, has there been a painter of the airs; none of color's wondrous workings amongst the skies overviewing the earth and seas; none of that has come to us. No originality has let imagination wander with it and lead it on into the making of an artist of the airs. Such a call to my youth almost comes

as the sacred voice of a duty to mankind. It has set a new world of promise, hopes, light, happiness, and beauty within me. Am I to refuse the opening gates of heaven for wanderings through earth's trodden, darkened roads? I should not only feel like a shirker towards mankind, but a criminal to my soul and a suicider to myself were I to refuse the golden burst of a new day.

Can I not rise to the opportunity and devote every inch of me to the attainment of its heights? For once in my life I hear the voice of a supreme ideal, of a duty, of a mighty work sweep down on me from its grandeur in silence and might. Those are the two dominant reasons. Much as you must be enraged by now, you will have to admit that they are all-important. I have a great love and consideration for you, as you know, but more than any love on earth must I be true to my ideal. However reasonable though it may seem to have joined, I will not attempt to surround the service with gauzy veils of pink and blue. It is a dangerous service. Many do not come back. It is no child's play nor no youth's dream. It is a serious business, hard study, hard work, hard fight. You'll no longer have a son in the truck service, but a son in the aviation. No longer one who intends to help France, but a son who offers to *sacrifice his life for France.* Just so much greater that my new service has become, so much the greater reason can you have to be proud of me, and if the love you have in me is worthy of a true Roman mother, you will thank our God that you have a child worthy of you. I appeal to that admiration and to that high inspiration you said

came to you from me. I put it to a test now, and hope that being deeply rooted in your heart, it shall not fail to soar still higher, and instead of useless grief, rejoice in the light of my recent decision. A true mother, attached to her country and hopeful in her son, could only be thankful that her son had realized that love and hope she had so long placed in him. Consider the event not as regrettable, but as the glorious realization of all the hopes you had placed in me and the nobility you had prayed to see reflected within me. I think, en plus, that I have at last a right to call myself a *Man.* I feel like a New Russia. When I come back to you, you will find in me, I hope, not the statuette of a child and a mother's son, but the monument of a man and a mother's protector. You know, also, that I have usually been of a brooding nature. Well, now, by Jove, the world just seems one happy burst of sunshine.

Hoping you feel as wonderfully happy as I am

Affectionately

JACK

Passy, July 30

MY DEAR MOTHER: —

Life is very amusing for me. Three days ago in Paris, I crossed the wide Rotunds, bridges, and fluttering boulevards on taxi-wheels of a fortune-smiled-at, flattered, caressed, and known everywhere in each café, on the street, in the theatre; I enjoyed it immensely.

Now I am writing you on a pine-wood table (such things are famous) in a barren room looking out on the

little cobble-stone street of Passy where I sometimes wander down in the morning's bustle of vegetable women in the sunshine, or in the evening's mingle of harmonicas, and a rare, sickly street lamp. I am nevertheless enjoying it immensely. In other words, three days ago I was a duke of pleasure; now I am a broke artist. (I say "artist," for all day long I work at drawings for my chief.)

I enjoyed spending my permission money fastly and wonderfully and now the contrast of work and nothing to enjoy but three meals at headquarters, which I never could stand before.

A month ago I was a truck-driver, dreaming a little and boring myself considerably. A month from now I shall be an aviator, concentrating at continuous work one day, and snobbishly, but oh, how joyously, receiving the invisible laurels of thousands of friends — friends and admirers everywhere I go. You see life over here, the way I am managing to make it, has little in comparison with the conventional, custom-tied, drudgerized, too-much-civilized life of Peaceful America. I consider myself most fortunate to be able, in these modern times, to turn my odd and peculiar dreams into realization — a realization rendered all the more beautiful by the oddities of life itself. What I contemplated in a hero, what I envied in the knight-errant or the highway cavalier, what I wondered at in the rich duke, what I smiled at in the poor but happy artist, or contemplated in the growing of a poet, all of romance and all of adventure, all of continuous heights and activities

of a life that flows without a worry or a moment of grief — all of variety and wonder of war and of love — all of youth is now within my reach and ready to be moulded in my hand. Were I to desire the hanging gardens of Babylon or the electric metallic marvels of Mars, I could invent and realize them almost immediately — so has my self-confidence grown with the help of war — the great electrifier, that banishes all stiff conventionality and stimulates passions, imaginations, free thinking and free acting, till the land of war becomes a land of living poems and poets' dreams of anything you want to make — so supple and various does war make a country.

I have thought so much about this aviation that I have no more thoughts left on it, excepting now and then, coming out of the metro, for instance, into the midst of green foliage and cabs, smart gowns and smiling Oriental women at the Madeleine, I feel that it is more for me and that I am almost a Greek Marathon hero returning to the laurels and rose-strewn paths of welcoming, pleasure-giving Athens; or else when I notice a mother in black gazing at me, or a decorated soldier inspecting me, I already instinctively turn to their eyes the little part of my uniform over my heart, where the golden insignia of a pilot-aviator shall soon be glistening when I become one of that fraternity of MEN.

Now and then, too, I realize that it is a heavy task for a boy who has always been fondled. That for me to make a big machine hang just right, twelve thousand feet above solid ground is n't going to be such an

Arabian dream as I may now contemplate. But my brain is very much shrunken up and lazy these days, as I am pretty much of a loafer, scribbling off some weak drawings, walking self-consciously down the street, and lacking a great deal of serious occupation. The hard work ahead at the Aviation School will do me much good and the concentration of flying will keep up the turning speed of my brains, acquired by the work at the school. Just now I am going to dig in hard and draw like a demon, hour in, hour out, for a couple of days. That will help, and besides it's got to be done.

Paris is bad when you're broke. Its pleasure-reflecting monuments and houses and people are no good as an inspiration to your imagination unless you are part of it or unless you have lived here steadily and can forget New York enough to consider Paris a city with all its excitement instead of a beautiful garden.

The country, then, is better for a poor man's brain. It has gigantic night scenes and infinite day scenes.

Ah! well, there's lots ahead. This is just a little lull, a sudden drop from a week that was extremely fast and tickling. I regret its pleasures muchly, not being willing to shrink into the "coutumier et bourgeois" surroundings of Passy and quite out of place, therefore lazy, unappreciative, and unimaginative. I think I'd die if my imagination died before I did. It's what makes the world seem good to me.

I saw Carlos the other day for the first time. He could hardly speak, and myself — I was somewhat silly. He is just as modest, if not more, for the poor boy has been

through as bad a three months as one could wish. I found him a skeleton and much worn. But he's all right now and just as good-hearted as though he were ever the same kid at rue Notre Dame des Champs.

Passy is a funny quarter — a mixture of semi-poor and semi-rich. It's awfully out of the way and only has the advantage of looking over the Seine from one street. But oh, it's always Paris, and believe me, my lady, that makes every cobble-stone a black diamond.

French women remind me of collies, beautiful, Oriental, and treacherous. They would make great butterflies too, and sometimes a blue jay or just a simple every-day egoist. Most of them are intelligent, but they spoil it with a lot of jabber which is supposed to be the modern representation of what used to be French wit in the time of Louis XIV. Of course, I don't know many of the high-brows as yet, but when I shall, I don't think I'll be surprised at my opinions.

Paris is a beautiful series of étoiles, monuments and amusements, but it is n't a city and has none of the city's characteristics. It is like an exposition ground grown historic. New York is the best example of a typified city of to-day. It has a wonderful current of energy and progress throughout every nook and corner and wide boulevard. Paris is very much of a summer resort with a few old buildings of much art.

There are a number of "Croix de Guerre" men of this service en permission; their haughtiness makes me quite jealous, but I'll come around and give them the "once over" when I shine up in my aviator's tunic.

If I'm coming home before I train I think it would be quite the stunt to come back in my aviator's uniform. Leave a blue light in the chimney so that when I fly back I'll know where the house is.

The idea of a country house is wonderful! I've always wanted one of those play houses where you can run the car all over the garden and make the cook mad and the crow crow. Be sure to fix up an aero shed in my room; besides I will be no longer able to sleep peacefully unless you keep an extra loud electric fan roaring at my bedpost and making a breeze like 140 miles an hour.

But having my room is going to be far more wonderful than your having the whole house; although I won't be there often, I'll enjoy immensely what few parties I will have and will keep my room always ready for intimate guests and other intimate teas.

Now see if you can tackle the very difficult job, which I cannot, of telling everybody — one and all — how I thank them and only think of them, and a few more, such as the Berlin official could invent.

After that, take all my real love for yourself, and keep it where you can use it when necessary.

JACK

August 5, 1917

MY DEAR DICK: —

I don't know whether I ever told you how high I jumped when I received that telegram or not, but I guess it was high enough for you to see. Any recent

earthquakes need not disturb you — they were only the result of my landing afterwards.

But, while we're yet both on dry land, let me sincerely advise you not to sign up in the ambulance or the trucks or any such stuff for the duration of the war.

I think I know you pretty well, and being fully convinced that you are romantic — as really romantic as I am — I can assure you that one visit to the front will fully convince you in turn that the peaceful life of any such service is not what you would want. I say "peaceful": I mean lukewarm; something that is far worse.

Were it altogether peaceful, it would still be comprehensible, but is lukewarm — neither war nor peace; just a way of touring the front with as much comfort as possible, totally undeserved.

Now I am not telling you to stay out of it by any means. On the contrary, get into it for as short a time as possible. Then when you have seen the war at a close hand and long enough to make you realize the extremes of bravery and "recompense" that war offers to youth — then get a transfer either to America and absolute peace or to France and absolute war — fighting, loving, and glory.

I am not saying this from an inconsiderate nor from a dare-devil point of view; I am telling you that perfectly coolly, at my little table that I use for a studio and all in the heart of summer-time, wonder-time, Paris. I am also telling you that with a conscientious knowledge of the danger of real warfare. I have been under shell-fire myself, and know that in advising my dearest

friend to do the such, I am also flirting with the bitter thought that I might very possibly never see him again, were he to become a real soldier and a real man.

But as I said, once you have inspected for yourself the ranks of the men of the day, you will be more capable to decide whether or not you wish to partake of their eternity.

One thing sure, though. Do not stay in America one moment longer than necessary. Come over immediately, and I shall get you into something immediately, which will soon show you that those back home are hypnotized with the vague idea that war to-day has nothing of its ancient wonders — something that will prove to you that America and peace are barren attics compared to the Arabian Nights that the present adventure of chivalry has realized on the European continent.

This something will be either the ambulance or truck or some other such touring facility that will enable you to go prospecting for inspiration and therein find the nugget of decision.

In fact, were you to remain in Paris only, distant as it may be from reality, you would not be long to decide that the curtains were going up on "Don Juan" and that it was precious time to profit of it.

Of course though, war may impress you differently — a great event has many aspects. You may possibly find more beauty in stoically dying at the wheel of your cannon than in making of war a constant spring of Youth, Adventure, and Romanticism, with the thousand varieties of the such that I find and make of it all.

Again you may prefer to develop in you what is of the greatest value to others — your Art. But could you not use your Art amongst the soldiers? One can never foretell the philosophy of any one else. One can only guess at it, and it was on a guess that I faintly indicated to you the possibilities this conflict offers to the soul of a Byron. I hope, however, that my guess did not miss the mark, for if so, I should sincerely pity you.

When you reach France, if you come, you must arrange to see me immediately, and we can clear matters up a little, for they must be doubtlessly somewhat blurred, seeing that you are three thousand miles from the truth.

Hoping that the drill of cavalry camp did n't leave you in an asylum too long, I am most enthusiastically,

Your pal

JACK

Do ask me some questions, if there is yet time. I have great hopes that there is not time and that we shall meet again soon.

Paris, 7 *August*, 1917

MY BRAVE LITTLE MOTHER: —

War is pretty hard, is n't it? It's pretty hard on many mothers and sisters and sweethearts, but when it comes, it must be taken just as the other events of the world, and not only must it be taken, but it must be overcome. That requires much bravery, and now and

then much suffering, but all is rewarded proportionately. According to what you shall have suffered, shall you be decorated before the ranks of all humans with the respect that is justly due you. The greater your share, the greater yourself, and I sincerely hope that you shall not shrink before the greatness that war has in store for you.

It is no ethereal theory. It is a living fact and no one in this gigantic conflict is more honored and respected and loved than the mother of a hero "poilu." It is one of my greatest ambitions to be able to attain for you those honors and those sympathies; to make all others respect you through me, and to build for you the pedestal that befits a noble mother and a thoroughbred woman.

To-day I am happier, perhaps, than I have been before in my life. I have successfully passed the rather hard examinations to the Aviation Corps and perhaps if my work of training is equally successful, an officership which at my young age can be considered rather honorable. To be a leader in a volunteer service, where there is no test, is somewhat of an advantage, but to gain an officership in the army towards which the whole world turns is an honor that any boy of nineteen can be proud of. I certainly intend to devote all my efforts towards the such.

As I said before, I am rejoicing to-day, not as a boy returning from a long term at school, but as a man who is distinctly proud to have taken the first great step in life that shall lead him to superiority and to have overcome all primary obstacles from hesitation to examina-

tions in the fulfilling of such a heavy task. Immediately I shook hands for not less than a quarter of an hour with my chum who also passed; then, after ten days' poverty, I rushed to order a new aviation uniform — the latest "cri de Paris" — and then to the Café de la Paix where I feasted on chocolate ice cream and the sympathetic handshakes of many of the friends I have gathered about me since my last return to Paris. I am not bubbling and spurting with excitement, but quietly listening to an eternal murmuring of happiness within me — a steady unfailing flow of joy and content.

To-day I received another letter from you — that zig-zag strong writing gives me the most cheer when I go through my daily mail. Your letters are all very strong and very devoted — intensified by the journey they have risked from you and America to me and France.

By the way, I passed the physical exams to-day with the highest marks. The mental exam is just to find out what kind of a boy you are, so I got by perfectly.

Ah là! This is Wednesday. This morning I had my mental test — a cinch, but very agitating. I went up before a board of three Majors armed with a pretty stenographer. After a few questions one of them noticed how my recommend letters indicated my high standards.

"What do you think of the German submarine campaign?"

"I don't like it from a humanitarian standpoint, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't approve of pirateship such as they did in their recent examples."

"What, for instance?"

I named and explained.

"If you were admiral in Germany, would you carry the campaign out?"

"I probably would because I would have a German mind, but myself, I would not."

"Do you approve of the sinking of the ship, leaving aside the question of the crew?"

"I do."

"All right, you'll be notified."

"Good day, sirs."

It's all over. I await my official acceptance which I am pretty sure of getting. Of course I'm a little impatient, though. I ordered a wonderful uniform — khaki, with gold aviators' buttons! ! ! Just wait until you see your little boy in his aviators' outfit standing next to his aeroplane, ready to mount the winds and review the mighty fortresses of the German lines! Just how would you like to be shown through the hangars, introduced to the legion of heroes, and carried over the land of France at some three hundred kilometres an hour by the little boy who back in America could only dream of such living poetry!

I want to get out to training school (perhaps that does n't sound good!) right away, but in the army you have to wait, wait, wait, and then wait some more! I'm dying to get to work, but I may have to finish this service out yet — horrors!

Nevertheless, I'm enjoying new privileges and boasts already. I, little Jack Wright, take pleasure now and then by extending an invitation to visit the first American Aviation Camp in France, and if a special friend, I sometimes condescend to promise them a short tour in *my aeroplane.*

Would you like to fly around the block? It really would be nice to spin up to New London in the aero for the week-end and bid them all the top o' the morn — eh, what?

I fully contemplate taking my mother up in her son's machine and giving her a bird's-eye view of the lines, if she drops into Paris soon.

Most sincerely and deeply affectionate towards you my very precious mother.

JACK

August 8, *Friday*

Just received official information of my official acceptance. I'm wild! ! ! Will start training as soon as my papers are signed by the General or Chief of Aviation. I am wonderfully happy. I am quiet but serene.

August 8–9–10

MY DEAR MOTHER: —

Another letter from you; it is so kind of you to write so often and I can only start to express my appreciation.

I regret to say that I shall not be able to return to New York before training. — I am not anxious to either, for I want to return to you a full-fledged pilot.

If you explained having a son in the war you might be allowed passage. I don't suppose you'd want to disguise as a nurse for a while, eh? But wait until I get home and we'll talk it over.

I went through the Musée d'Invalides. It was wonderful, dark and secluded, in a world of glimmering swords, ancient red cloaks and flags and wild mural paintings of the glory of the past. They certainly had the right to war. They decorated up their heroes with the gold and flourish such king-adventures merit. Officers were pachas and viziers riding on inlaid saddles, all ornamented with luxury and ever living in dreams of romance and adventure, that made their wars, not a series of organized systems of defense and offense, but one glorious epic of fairyland.

The hilt of a Lieutenant's sword contained more jewels than could be found in the possession of a Colonel to-day. The world must have been much richer — life more luxurious — philosophy less frozen, and souls more apparent in the days when l'Empereur presented Paris with the captured flags of every capital of Europe and Africa. What a pity men to-day must be so Jésuite that they cannot have rich beauty, oddity, and soul about them; that they cannot run through their life an elevating, enchanting vein of fairyland. Thank God I can and am actually doing it — not only dreaming.

Napoleon certainly did — even on campaign. He lined his tent with a cloth like the skin of a tiger; had long black leather map-carriers with the gold eagle and "N.," and sat in a chair of deep tarnished red leather

to write on a dark mahogany table oddly carved. That alone could have made him wonderful, but he has so many remarkable sides.

Paris takes me very well, as Americans are, for the present, so popular that even the cute midinettes are enlarging their horizon on life by the broad Far West sombrero.

I am now in front of my window feasting on a semi-white apartment house of little bourgeois; also a café for laborers and a "Bois et Charbons" sign of red and white. Pretty girls, and the rest of the population of Passy, pass before my little fancy iron railing — but it all has its parts in the whole of Paris, so I do not doubt that could I throw before you a perfect picture of its little street scene, echoing with French joy, damp and dusky, with a piece of sky overhead, I reckon you'd be very happy. 'Midst its funny barrenness sits myself, all in khaki and laziness, somewhat in dreams and hopes for the near future.

Remember me to all, and always and especially to Mr. W., my very good friend.

JACK

August 12, 1917

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER: —

I fully realize that you are suffering very much and cannot resist writing you more than usual. Later on you will become used to events and will even admire them, but I can fully understand that you do not now on account of the spontaneous overflow of grief. I am

very sorry to put you into this state, but I prefer giving you these moments of regret and illusion than to fail to give you absolute guarantee that I am an idealist who carries out his ideals and a poet who, more than dreaming, drifts his ambitions towards lofty goals. Were I to not live out my philosophy of life and to shrink before the call of an hitherto unknown muse of the airs; were I to go back on my steps — would be to me a far more painful suicide than the crime I may now be committing to you.

If, above all, though, above the flow of your tears you will only let the sunshine of my deep-rooted love for you come through, a wide-span rainbow of happiness may yet dawn across such skies of storm.

In any case, clouds always clear up and then the sun is ten times brighter through its brilliant contrast. I have no doubts but that already you are feeling more of that motherly happiness that you ought to feel, just as every mother in France has the privilege of possessing.

This afternoon I went to the old haunt — the Luxembourg Gardens — where just as the color-bedabbled crowds of Babylon used to wander through the sunshine and mingle along the streets and temples to some weird music, so the Parisians of the Latin Quarter pass on the right-hand terrace between the trees along the balustrade while the louder notes of the orchestra mingle with the distant roll of tramways.

They are either bourgeois — old and smiling, or young girls from little smart families, or from cafés, nodding to returned soldiers or listening good-naturedly

to the brainless eccentricities of would-be artists who have n't the ambition to get up and shake off their pettiness and mirage.

I also met an old school friend, now an adjutant doctor with the wounded ribbon, just as crazy as in the days he tried to ride down Grizier's beautiful oak stairway on his bicycle.

I loafed on a chair under the green of tall trees and while smoking nonchalantly my cigarette watched the flirtatious, good-for-nothing but very cute crowd go by.

I went to the Luxembourg, my old haunt, and found the same coffee fiends and their sweethearts enjoying love for nothing, hidden by the gardens, the one from his studies, the other from her café limelight.

Down in the bassin little children sailed their yachts and bumped into you, officer or general, if you did not get out of their way, for their yacht was full bent for the brink of the pond and they would n't take time to think about other people's nerves or wars and stuff. The donkeys still took other kiddies riding along the sun-baked walks bordered by hollyhocks and statues, and now and then a beautiful mother smilingly watched the future play, whilst up on the terrace the crowds of Babylon passed in haught and splendor and nothingness.

Once I was amused — a madman called the terrace crowd and started on a speech of his Arabian Nights. The crowd gathered like bees and butterflies and insects, until an old guard, realizing that his dignity and the authority of the law and the state had been trespassed, energetically expelled the madman by little mad gestures.

The madman walked to the gateway, proud, and calling to his disciples and the laughing children; once outside he started his speech all over again, but the "infidels" had vanished, so he discouragedly strode away.

And thus the Latin Quarter around the Panthéon goes on— everlastingly brainless, now and then cute, and rare times sympathetic in its heart-to-heart love affairs, but everlastingly brainless, exaggerating, studious, unenergetic, unambitious, unattaining, mad, but nevertheless quiet and happy. It has not seen enough of the world. Sometimes a big man is found there, but only because he will be undisturbed by traffic and a lack of strolling possibilities when outside of his work room.

Little does he care for the buzzing of the daily voices about him and little does he partake of them or belong to them. Fabre, Reclus, Bourdelle, they are all there and yet they are not there. It is because the stagnancy of a dead pond is less distractive to the thinker than the silver flow of Italian lakes, such as represent the smooth luxury of hotels and valets in the Étoile Quartier.

Paris is thick with the varied uniforms of every nation in Europe; it is a grand parade of uniformed heroes and nationalities.

I enclose you a poem or two, but they don't mean anything, less than fanciful notes; since I have n't concentrated for three months.

I expect to do fine in the aviation even though my real work will be reserved until after the war, for the

wear of war work will be too hard, I fear, to give much extra time for anything but distraction and severe duty.

I will send you some more poems later, but as it is late now, I shall retire and wait for the superlative later.

With these tender considerations for you that you can ever find in me, —

I am most affectionately your son

JACK

Paris, August 18, 1917

MY DEAREST MOTHER: —

Not yet off to school, but in the midst of many balancing complications.

I am now guard on the fourth floor of the Aviation Headquarters. Nevertheless I have much company: two little boys, Scouts, continually talking about everything in their kiddish lives, and now and then the Boy Scouts of the whole building — kids about twelve — gather around me like kittens and puppies. One of them draws remarkably and is very quiet. Doubtless a future artist.

They fixed me up a table with a blotting pad, roller, pen, pencils, ink, and a letter sorter during my absence and showed it to me when I came back as children about a Christmas tree.

It is a very new white building I am in; one of the type of new French apartment houses, with outpoints and inpoints, fanciful decorations, various windows, arched and rounded, cherubims playing along the bal-

conies — with wreaths of marble — all very white and sparkling in the sunshine. You know Paris is not a city of gray days, but one most at home in the sunshine, for a city is not characteristic in the weather that predominates in its climate, but in the weather that is most in tune with the city's architecture and the customs and occupations and pleasures of its people.

What better than sunshine would be in tune with the happy, pleasure-loving, "insouciant" gay Parisian architecture and people and gardens?

Now and then a French aviator comes up the stairs — often American ones. Messengers trip up and down continuously. Clerks, typewriters, "stenogs." Multitudinous rooms are continuously buzzing — those are the American Aviation Headquarters.

In the early morning a few workmen start to brush around and stir up the drowsy dust of night, while one by one the neat "stenogs" climb the long spiral marble stairway. At night they start putting on their hats a quarter of an hour early, vaguely smiling at their friend the clock, while the workmen have all disappeared. A few serious men make the typewriters count out endless papers on papers, all for the few at the front, until the house of Headquarters is deserted to its former peace and Parisian surroundings.

I have a few books to read and the hopes that I'll be in some kind of a job other than sitting still all day in front of a door.

I suppose by now you are well back in New York fretting about the heat, the war, your son, and the rest

of the world. Please don't fret. Just get some facts from a good source and sit down and reason it out like a man. You'll find that things are all for the best. They always have been . . .

JACK

19 *August*, 1917

MY DEAR MR. W.: —

Much to my pleasure I have just received your letter some days ago.

I gave my mother a pretty exact and impartial judgment of the American Field Service. It is monotonous, fatiguing without offering genuine work. I have brains and energy so I guess that my change was all for the good, and I certainly hope that you realize it. Although it may be the breaking of me, it will, if I last out, be the very finest making of me. Of course, you who are still in America and therefore hypnotized by three thousand miles distance from the actual front do not realize that of the whole war only one little strip of land and the sky above it are actual war; the rest is not dangerous and differs in no way from the work going on around the dock quarters in New York City, excepting that there is more idleness and less, far less, variety and brains.

The trucks consist of one part loafing around camp and the other part driving over the same roads in the same loads and the same sleepy, banging, greasy routine. I don't mind the dirt or the work, except that it is of weak results for such energies as a red-blooded boy may

have, to be turning out. Otherwise things are excellent, such as the food, the quarters, and the spirit and the boys.

I am not spending too much money, although I may go beyond my allowance; that is because laundry, clothes, etc., oblige one to spend more than at home, especially as things cost more. A shirt at home (white, soft) cost me $1.50 at the most; here it costs (of the same goods) $4.00.

The field outfit does not need to be dressy, but it must be respectable, as one is constantly meeting people and receiving invitations almost as at a summer resort. That may not be fully necessary to a soldier, but it's very pleasant. Then in Paris one has to be quite dolled up. Even the American troops are getting fancy — like the French — and will soon, like their allies, use corsets and powder-puffs.

But why tell you very specifically about the American Field Service. I am no longer in it. I am between two services. Although enlisted in the American Army, I am not yet at the Aviation School, but translating military books in an office at Headquarters. At first I was a door-keeper. Altogether, I'm having quite a rush time and political campaign getting out of the one into the other. It's as exciting as a day in court.

The service I am going into I know nothing about, excepting that after three months' training at an American Camp in Southern France, I will fly over the front as a First Lieutenant — if I pass all the exams. First

they give you a bombarding or observing machine — more dangerous than a duel machine, but less dangerous than school training. Then, if you're good, you get the privilege of running a duel boat. About six months from now, say, I ought to get a leave back to see you all and have the pleasure of making you all salute me, unless, in the meantime, I've joined the "other" fifty per cent of the aviators. I only hope, whatever the risk, that I will find the necessary "guts" stored in me somewhere to fight it out to the last round; then I shall be happy.

Mr. C. has doubtlessly informed you of his luck at getting to war. When I last saw him — yesterday — he had just received his stripes and was like a kid — bubbling over with joy and curiosity and such general good feeling that he handed me out two hundred francs as soon as I mentioned it. (This may sound as though he sometimes objected. He is very nice about it and never refuses; I prospect asking him for a few thousand next time — he'd give them to me.)

Mother's letters slightly tickle my vanity — that's why I like to get your sound, business-like notes now and then, so I hope you won't forget me when a couple of months go by and just send me a few lines in between your office hours, which I have always respected, inasmuch as I have never worked myself.

I have received everything that has been sent, including the luxurious menus (real fortunes) and the silent, but half decent good wishes of Tee and (permit me to include him) Imp.

Give my love to both of them — the beloved little Cain-raisers.

I am most respectfully

JACK

Paris, France, August 21

DEAREST MOTHER: —

Well, I'm not off for aviation training yet. It is most exasperating. It is enough to drive a man crazy. I just puff, blow, burn, and foam all day long, agonizing for aerial flights and compelled to make out office blanks and scratch out files, etc., from 8.30 A.M to 6.30 P.M.

Most of the time I have nothing to do, but must sit on a chair with about as much brain matter on the horizon as a stuffed animal, inanimately gazing out of a case window, in the spotted, dappled skin that once used to leap wild forest chasms and pant at the lapping waters of bottomless pools. But — out with the such! I am now a private, a number, and must consider the dullest, meanest, most monotonous jobs as wonderful staircases in the palace of Romance. I expect within four months, though, to be better off, by a good deal, and within a few weeks to be much better off, for then I'll be learning to fly, just like a baby bird, though still a human; learning to fly, to go through the metamorphose of growing wings, of feebly trying them out, and of finding soon, shading my human frame the mighty stretch of an eagle's wings ready to carry my human soarings to the heights of their realization. Yet in the

midst of such dreams here I am writing out the orders of a private!

I suppose, though, that I should make use of it all and make a wonderful poem of it, or an O. Henry article. (To think that most of his work was done in the stupidity of a cell room!) Or even write a story of it all. But there again is the difference between a man that counts, and a kid of nineteen. Nevertheless, I reproach myself, in the midst of all this tediousness, for not having the initiative to make my very tediousness into something great. Perhaps, if I reproach myself long enough, I'll succeed. I've made a good percentage of things out of reproaching myself.

I am living at a little hotel on rue Vaugirard, next to the hôtel Foyot, where I would have stayed, but that it was temporarily closed. This hotel takes quite a bunch out of my allowance, but it is preferable to flea-bitten French barracks where everything decent is immediately stolen. I eat breakfast about eight in the early Parisian sunlight that warms the sleepy faces of the cart-draggers and penetrates lazily along the café table where an equally sleepy face of an orderly is choking down black coffee with some bread. Then I take the metro to my new address. There a table in the secretary's office awaits me with a smiling rose-colored blotter, red ink, black ink, forms, files, and plenty of nothing-to-do. Outside a few autos snort — staff cars under the avenue trees and windows. Inside Majors and Lieutenants make you rise to attention every time one of them crosses the hall to inquire about the

health, children, appetite, maladies, tooth-powder, and military affairs (perhaps) of another of them. There I sit, a true school of patience and a model petrified to any sculptor's delight. At 1 P.M. I stop sitting and with such brains as have n't exhaled during the long session, I go to déjeuner. That takes place at a little round table on the sidewalk where an apache girl waits on me crossly behind a few bushes.

Some English airmen gather there and talk. They are only clerks usually. Now and then a pretty maid drops into a chair beside me (not with me! ! !). Now and then no one is there. I usually smoke a cigarette (being off duty) after two dishes of a dessert comprised of stewed gooseberries and whipped sour cream.

Then I walk around the block, take in more sunshine, more air, more faces, more Paris: its bridges and towers and trees, and then come back to the smiling rose-colored blotter and the blanks and files. Oh, such room for a soul!

Well, after 6.30 P.M. I do have a pretty good time. I feel office-worn and that feeling makes all rest a pleasure. I take the metro to the Odéon; imagine, mother, the Odéon! How would you like to get off the subway at a station called *Odéon* or *Maine* or *Opéra* or any of those sweet cellars which lead up to a burst of sunshine and styles and flowing ease and pleasure and quiet moving scenery of Paris? Well, I drop into a little leathered-cushioned café at the carrefour de l'Odéon and there as the lights come on gradually, I sit and restfully eat a long meal on a hungry stomach, while a few

artists make the place familiar — a few deputies or business men make it clean and respectable and a few pretty Parisiennes with their delicate bows make the whole of a "smiling atmosphere," as my futurism at its extremes might say.

Then, with a heavy reposing digestion silently under way, with the extra pleasantness of another cigarette, I make my way, a hand in one pocket, chamois gloves in the other hand, lazily towards the Boulevard Saint-Michel and the Luxembourg, a true inhabitant of the Latin Quarter. And you have to be a "true inhabitant" to enjoy it.

When I had money, when I was just back on leave, I came to the Quarter and found it pretty, for it was a reminiscent — but no more; its poverty and pettiness bothered me. Now those two things it possesses are dear to me. Everybody is poor like myself and therefore chats with me without the expectation of a party or an auto ride; everybody is friendly and good-hearted and all in bad luck.

Immediately the Luxembourg Gardens, where artists and students and models roam, the little rues and the boulevard or two, the old senate house, black against a sad evening sky, the cabs rolling in silence on their rubber wheels, the milkmaid, the flower girl, the statue you always see before going into the hotel, the old proprietor, all these objects of pettiness, but of a pleasant and sincere sympathy to the extent their little brains and souls permit, all the café-haunters and garden wanderers, and sometimes even the respected silent gods, distinguished

and envied by their red rosettes at the buttonhole, become dear friends of hard luck, but of good cheer just the same.

Well, by then it is about nine or earlier, the night has come, and I have entered into my little room, payed the proprietor and asked to be called at 7 A.M. A last cigarette, a poem of Verlaine for a prayer, and I am sleeping off in about as much empty space as at the office all the long day through — hour after hour.

Thus, I live in Paris — an hour or so at breakfast — at lunch and at dinner; otherwise I am just one of the corner-stones in one of the many white apartment houses that dumbly yawn their bay windows in the Paris sunlight, but that yet help to make it all a wonderful metropolis. I resign myself to my fatal part of a dumb animal in the mighty theatre of the war, but with the hopes that my sixth letter from this one will bring you the joyful expectancy of getting ready to leave Paris and boredom for the country and airdom.

The picture you sent was not me. We do not have bayonets in the trucks and never go on parade. We are not soldiers and not ornaments.

But, thank Heavens, the present case of "to be" does not apply here. I can only say I *was* so and so in the trucks. I gloriously cast them away from me forever. They only have two decent things about them to be remembered — they brought me over here for one and the luxurious English pasture in front of my trailer at camp for another.

Now I lay me down to sleep — that is back to the

smiling rose-colored blotter and the gray-blue walls of the office.

Most humbly

JACK

In the glorious service of his country;
God save America!

August 22, 1917

DEAREST MUZZIE: —

I feel somewhat better towards this office drawling. Perhaps it won't last over two weeks and who could n't hang around that long!

If one is overwhelmed with work it takes volonté to see it through, but then your work inoculates you with a certain desperate go and energy to rush it through by day and night; such a victory is decidedly a test in a man, of course, and one to be proud to impose on one's self, but to meet the test of doing absolutely nothing but sitting still for two weeks is a test far greater and one that I consider as mighty good for one and myself.

It will depend entirely on my own brain to distract the long hours away, and perhaps I can even make the hours profitable, if I sit down and think up a problem to think out again. What more suitable occupation for a bellboy than to tie up knots and then to untie them again?

When I do get down to camp, I'll have to make good, through the series of exams (not easy either) or I'll be having to wash windows till the war's over.

My chum is so grouchy about being held up with me

this way that he can't talk, so it makes me feel quite optimistic. Anybody always makes you feel the opposite unless you're mighty good friends.

We're out for a cheaper room Sunday (if we get it "off," for we don't always) and perhaps we'll rent bicycles to save carfare.

To-day I get my uniform — U.S. private. The coat — supposed to fit tight — comes down to my knees and up to my ears. I have n't dared to try the rest on, but am ordered to to-morrow. How Paris will enjoy me! Thank God it's only for about four months and three and one-half of those out in the country — hidden carefully from all pretty eyes and respectable "salons."

Thank Heavens, Bill is getting into aviation too. He will go into training next week. Just now he is shovelling coal for the American Field Service. I'm glad to see him get into the war with the rest of us, as he has n't seen much so far. Some of my school-mates are already in Flying Camp.

Paris is bathing pleasantly, contentedly in its last months of sunshine, for in October all is cold. Everybody seems happy with life in this metropolis where no work, traffic, or noisy bustle is noticeable.

A badly wounded man or a girl in mourning, crying while driving her street car, now and then reproach your smile if you're a civilian, but if you're a soldier, they make you proud and if you're an aviator (which I'm in the hopes of being) they make you feel like a god, to know you're out for their vengeance.

This office work sure does teach you to enjoy the

freedom of spare hours, their out-of-door sunshine, the width of the avenues, the common people, happily, leisurely working about their little stores, and all the many little things that a man without many wonders and luck soon takes pleasure to discover.

But I'd so much rather be in the trenches.

You must understand that from now on, all my letters are to be censored — since I am not permitted to seal them and since they go through the Service's censorship always. I will not even be allowed to tell you where I am, and a number of mutual whisperings will have to be cut off, in view of the fact that they would become public.

One of my "camion" pals just jumped into the office, back from training camp! He had aviator buttons all over him and a new outfit, boots, uniform, and everything of that wonderful and *only tenue* — the *tenue* that makes people look up to you at every step you take, at every one you glance at.

His face was a little more set and his smile a little heartier — already he was the beginning of one more of those BIG MEN that the war alone has been able to turn out, one of the Grand Legion. He was as happy as a king, but rather upset because for the first time he had seen an accident — yesterday. A couple of boys met in mid-air and were buried far underground. One, a sailor, was just on the point of receiving his diploma and lieutenantship.

All this has again made me impatient and made me prouder to stick through this nightmarish office period.

I'm like a chained colt with a race track just out of reach.

Just you wait till I get my pilot-ship. I'll show them they've misjudged me, if I can't prove it now. All will come out good; it must. I feel that I can make things succeed and do as good as any one. I always have.

You see, I'm not boasting; I'm just giving you the course of my intimate thoughts.

This is a funny letter. Every second the door opens and every time the door opens I must bob up my head to see if it's an officer, etc., which requires the bobbing up of my whole self, to attention. I'm sure learning what the army is — so much that I consider myself bold if I ask any one in the street the time, without bowing a few times, or if I call a taxi without standing at attention to the chauffeur.

The army is awfully funny; but it will be very grand for me soon.

Last night we had a grand celebration. A friend of Jack's had dinner with us at the Latin Quarter where we latter are living. We introduced him to the famous Quarter and he grew white with fear that at any street corner nude Bacchantes would turn up.

We had a feast at a little restaurant I like considerably; a feast of melon, beefsteak, French-fried potatoes, whipped cream and fruit. It was glorious. We were spending money gluttonously and dionysianacly. We were giving the friend some banquet — some treat, some sight. To wind up furiously, we had a cup of coffee at the Taverne du Panthéon (now dead excepting

for a friend or two). Then we showed him our sweets at the "Grand, Grand, Hôtel-Château." There we read O. Henry, instead of listening to a fair one miss notes on the piano, and having laughed and smoked the hours away until midnight (horrors!) we went to bed much disgusted that the maid would n't get up in the middle of her sleep and cook us chocolate.

I felt after that celebration as happy and as dizzy (I don't mean any liquor!) and excited as I have felt after any of the merry-go-roundiest parties at — from the Biltmore or the Domino Club to the Café de la Paix — yet during the whole evening we spent no more than $3.50 for the three of us, including everything.

To-day I am reading the strongest novel in history, "Madame Bovary" (Flaubert), a book which I bought five years ago, but towards which I have never felt intelligent enough to tackle. I am only reading it now, much against my wish, because I might not get another chance very soon.

In between the paragraphs I sketch the people that come in to interview the Secretary I'm working for, and all along I gather and often jot down little notes which will all help in some later work or other.

It is very interesting, not only as an office, nor even as an office of urgent military affairs, but more yet as an office that tends only to matters of the greatest work on earth — AVIATION. The boys that come in have faces either of fools or heroes and they know what they are signing up for. The men that come in are already decorated multiply from the various armies they repre-

sent. Now and then a few peculiar stenographers or other insignificant people make you smile as the Secretary takes care of their individual, remarkable, unique qualities — not from experience, perhaps, but hidden in the heart — you know — one after the other in the same elegant fashion of quietly, optimistically discharging them.

Good-bye for a while, mother.

With my best love to all my friends and my bestus love to you.

JACK

It seems that in the Field Service or at the Y.M.C.A. I should meet every one I had ever said good-bye to. Last night I met my history "prof" who has just left Andover. Even the memory of history classes seemed good and slightly home-sickening, but only for a second. The only scene that makes me homesick longer than a second is that of you — on the chaise longue — three thousand miles away.

Love

JACK

1 *September*, 1917

MY DEAR DR. STEARNS: —

It has been four months of continuous change in life; new adventures, new hopes, and new inspirations that have separated me from the unforgettable day on which I left you on the dock in New York. If you have not been able to join us on account of a duty — more

silent but none the less admirable — I can at least express to you, through my hearty appreciation, the uplifting, graduating work Andover has sent us to, on the battle-fields of France.

At first we were satisfied with automobile service, but in continuation with that same spirit we had cultivated back on Brothers' Field, we, as a majority, have joined the American Aviation with the ambition of representing the place we came from, to your complete satisfaction, for though a third of a year and three thousand miles away, we still take pride in saying, after a good piece of work, "I guess Al would be pleased at that!"

If any of the fellows left behind inquire about us, do tell them that we not only talk of them while eating a meal at the front, or joke of those days while greasing the cars, but that we go still farther and hope to renew old college days by the stronger bonds that come with days of real life and action. Tell them that we are standing all in a row on the shores of France to cheer the boat that will bring them where they have the privilege of being sent. I say a privilege, for since we have been over here we have learned to sympathize with more than the "Rah-rah" side of life, and to perfect our first comprehension of the words you endeavored to brand us with.

We thank you for it — for the foreword you gave to this larger outlook; for the warning, the guiding, the inspiration we owe you.

It is only my sincerity that makes me write so straight-

forwardly, thanking you. It is only my sincerity that makes me write so nakedly. It is true American thanks, straight to the point.

It would be foolish of me, in fact, to attempt to circle around metaphors and figures to tell you how, at the front posts, in the barracks, all alone, we have remained true students and have not forgotten the direct and sincere help that you have given us for some four years of critical days at school, some four years, every day, from the chapel pulpit or the office desk.

Some of us are more than just grateful, and I take pleasure in realizing that I, with them, owe a very deep-rooted inspiration of the various forces and elements of the world to your talks from the chapel platform, as well as a very substantial and generous help to me from the office desk.

You have been to me a cherished principal and one of the few men for whom I would do anything. I hope in the future to consider you as a friend. It is the hope of all the little band of students who now look back to what gave birth to our present happy duty. It is because these thoughts were deeply rooted within me alongside a few other undying incidents of my youth, that I have taken the liberty to write you plainly and freely as though I were an intimate. It would not be irrelevant to add that half the Andover Unit is now in training and shall soon be the "Commissioned Flying" Andover Unit in the service of America, just as in former wars.

This letter may sound haughty, but it is not of us

but of Andover and what you turn out that I am so proud.

Endeavoring to express the good cheer of all the Unit and wishing you to accept my brief thanks for what you have stood for, to me, I am

Most respectfully
JACK WRIGHT

Paris, September 1

MY DARLING MUZZIE, —

Who for one summer, at least, has managed to spend her vacation in the country, now and then a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, thereby fully retiring from the usual routine of the year, so as, within the refreshing, isolating arms of some country cottage, to become completely renewed and almost foreign to the city. Why, one week after you will have been back to New York you'll not realize you ever saw a green tree, or a so-called shady brook. And that is the way you obey the prescriptions of your son. What a patient! Luckily I am not the family doctor.

Mr. S. has just found me after wandering from one headquarters to another, thoroughly seeing Paris (very pleasant!) and winding up with the grand finale of the big spiral stairway of Aviation Headquarters, which politely, at every floor, opens up a way into some fifty different offices. Well, he invited me out to the cinema.

I'll expect to be out to training camp by the first week of September; either that, or suicide, or a rash adven-

ture into society's gabbling with a few of my introduction letters or something half as red as this ink — I don't know exactly.

Your last letter has just arrived with a full gust of autumnal winds tossing browned leaves around silky dresses of midinettes and pulled down hats of business men. The summer's last sun splashes across the Champs Élysées, around the Étoile, and sprays of it sift through the twining clusters of trees. Streaks of limousines in khaki or gray pass up the silent, stylish avenue and back again toward the Place de la Concorde where taxis make a little more racket, so as gradually to introduce you to the hum and buzz and more frequent passing of friends and officers of the Madeleine and the Café de Paris which quite eclipses the Opéra and is the main step-stone between the Madeleine and the beginning of the end: Montmartre.

Your letter, then, of August 7th, arrived under favorable omens, but it is not the first dionysian blowings of autumn, nor the happiness of Paris that convinces me that it is the best letter that I ever received from you. I'll take it up point by point, perhaps with prejudice because once decided on my philosophy it would take a harder blow than a letter to change me.

First, I did receive and most certainly did enjoy the one hundred francs you sent me on my birthday. I am delighted that you thought of me so promptly, for it came exactly on permission time and many were the "cafés au lait," the "fiacres," the "promenades" that it afforded me through summer-time Paris.

I do not underestimate what I am doing. Vanity has always been one of my blessed qualities. You, rather, overestimate me, inasmuch as you cannot see the reality of things. When I was leaving America, I, too, had the idea that the "camions" were a terrible work. I've found out since then that it is not up to my qualities. (Just listen to that vanity! you who say I have none. Feed upon such an outspread of it!)

You speak of the benefit of having contact with the simplest and the most monotonous, so as to learn it. I think that for the last three months I've had as much of it as possible. Monotony has some beauty, perhaps, but you have to be mighty irregularized and occupied to see it.

I intend not to take either spiritual idealism or romantic idealism, but to take both and live life completely. The two cannot be done together; they must be distinct epochs — one the epoch of youth, the other the epoch of manhood. One may tend to overlap and destroy the other, but I intend to separate them distinctly by the blessed medium of work — a pool into which man can ever plunge and come out new and refreshed. If I win, I will have found a bit of new philosophy, which — not contenting itself with one grand ideal of all life — takes all the beauty life contains and makes man perfect in his complete absorption of all existence. If I lose, it is the sacrifice of myself. It is all somewhat of a chance, but what great reformers, Luther, Calvin, etc., ever took up their ideas without

the consciousness that they might get their heads cut off to punish with.

Outside of all that "deep stuff" there is the simple fact that I don't expect to last long in this new game; so why not? I mean — so why not experiment? Everything is a chance that's worth while. Of course, though, I want you to understand that I am far above some of your superstitions.

My ideas are not so stingy as they may seem, for if I succeed, I will give a better philosophy to those whom I come in contact with; at least if I write, it will be much improved by my experience and therefore able to send out its word. But I don't like to talk much about the writing, for I'd soon be all talk and no work.

I don't find any trace of Diriks, and am very sorry, as he is not only a friend, but one who could have a lot to show and tell me. Please send me his address and I'll buy him all the bottles of whiskey in Paris.

I've seen Mrs. B. and Mrs. S. lately; both were very nice to me.

The money you make on your Beaux-Arts School for charity fund — if sent to me, would be given out directly to those many biting cases I constantly find at the front and often behind the lines. It would be more appreciated — more certainly spent towards urgent relief work and would be more satisfactory to you, to know personally and intimately the corners into which you have sent great aid for great need. It would be interesting to you and your friends to receive news of the individual use made of the fund, which, not being enor-

mous, could be better used in that way. I might even photograph the different cases and you could have an album of your relief.

What dentist should I go to?

If I don't get out of here soon, I'll take a little hut in the country and go out there every night. I'll have a couple of fellows out there with me, my paints, books, and writing — all in the midst of autumnal golden Meudon or Bellevue; I'll have my little vegetable garden, a pot of geranium flowers in the window, with a yellow cur to bark at me when I get home and a fattening cat to claw at my sleeve and whine while I eat. I guess it will be cute, and I might get a piece of work done outside of office hours. The country is much better when you're broke anyway.

With my tenderest regards

JACK

September 3

DEAR MUZZIE: —

Well, I just fainted when I got your letter answering the news of my going into aviation! I expected a cable disinheriting me or a tube of deadly poison at least. A time-pose bomb or a tear-moistened epistle or a funeral ode would not have surprised me at all. As it was I just blew into a very big balloon and burst! But now, something great — I'm off — off to fly! Off in a cloud of dust! ! !

At last my chains are broken — monotony and the rest of the long office hours are under my feet; I breathe

new life from a new breeze in the air. The sun is brighter and the world larger and I feel greater than all together. Now I start my *big life.* It's the beginning of all I am to be in the world, and I can feel myself going ahead all ready. Things have become amenable to me. I no longer shall awe at the factors and forces in the world, but free from all ties of conventionality or defects, I shall be able to handle perfectly all the forces the world puts together. Of spiritual or material beings I have a full right to seek the command, and thanks to work, I shall certainly arrive at something.

From now on I'll not only feel happy, but very happy, no matter how barren the aviation camp gets — not matter whether it dries up and the ground cracks — whether the trees die and I never get a leave — no matter what happens — there's always much ahead for me and also overhead.

You see, I'm going to stick to aviation after the war. I'll get a superintendent's job and write at the same time. I'll have to do quite a bit of studying, though.

Now, since I have not done any art for about four months, I feel that it was all a dream of childhood, but I count that a little work and study will put me back — a little brain work to wake me up and then a few sensations.

Now you, too, are going to feel some new joys, those that my new letters will bring you. I'm not going to keep a diary — just a notebook so you'll hear more fluently of my days of which not a one shall have a dull hour. Can you imagine a more wonderful realization

— not a dull hour in such a dull world! I guess Isadora would rather jump at that and you — and who not?

But there's one thing lacking and that's you. Now stop and think how you can get over here, because I want to see you — is n't that plain enough. What more of an excuse could you invent? I want to take you up in my aeroplane. Paris is starting the royal season of autumn, enough crisp in the gay sunshine to make people walk snappier and smile brighter — a crisp "pep" in the air and everything running to perfection — "leaves of soldiers" — the war and the friendships.

Some recent mournings are the only trouble.

Much love

JACK

P.S. One of the most tickling sensations I could have would be popping off one of those "saucisse" German observation balloons. I've always looked at their eggy forms up in the air and always wanted to get at one. How I'll enjoy it!

Paris, September 5, 1917

MY DEAR MOTHER: —

I long very much for some intelligent friends. This life of college boy without studies is funny for a week. The week has passed. I need some artistic friends of my own age to go with, to discuss and adventure with — to laugh and work with. I must somehow gather them around me, but it is hard.

American boys when they are artists are fine. They have energy, soul, infinite fantastic desires, quick thought

open wide, and an originality that they delightfully turn into some new school — some mystic piece of oddity that always makes them wonderful.

Look at H. — a good society boy when he needs must be — ready to joke over the tea-cup or with the elevator boy, but always a fine deep shaft of art, of originality, of a worship of a school mingled with ideals — always a fanciful floating of images that pick out the biting bits of sentiment, and in turning them into art, make his company interesting — you are always conscious of it.

Look at Dick always paddling through the stormy clouds, châteaux towers, prisoners, princesses, highway robberies, of the moyen âge mixed with a delight of the rush and style of to-day — he is a continuous germ of romance and yet a vital boy — not a dreamer — a boy who is doing something and has the stuff in him — he is the artist friend again, but not the dreamer.

Look at L. — psychological, sees ideals of color all around him, thinks, while he's on a visit — obscure and shut up in dreams of color — yet material at the same time, a sport through and through — a sturdy American boy.

These French kids have dreams continually. They are effeminate and ephemeral. They totter — they're not strong enough to realize their dreams — they're not men. They can't be sturdy friends. They're not manly and energetic. They seem so hopeless that they can't be much, nor amount to much else. They need sports like a sick man needs medicine. They need something to straighten them out.

What am I to do then? Continually spread out my thoughts on fool's laughs and dallying appreciations, or shut myself up in solitude or fall in love and think some simple girl knows what I'm talking about?

You want to know something of my aviation program? I have told you much already. I can't tell you very much more on account of the censor, but here is a general idea of it which is public and permissible to tell: —

I go to training camp in the most beautiful country of France, this autumn. After three months' training — proportional to weather conditions, I will know all about aeroplanes, motors and tactics and fighting. I will have passed semi-final and final exams and will be a full-fledged aviator pilot with the grade of a First Lieutenant of the U.S. Army in whose service I will be.

I am enlisted now as a private for the duration of the war and will not get my stripes for some three months, when I am sent to the front to fly.

First let me tell you that the worst part of flying is learning it. If I get through school I will feel like a dog getting through his adolescence.

Now, there are different types of machines, but they can be divided into two classes. At first you are sent into the first and most dangerous class; then if you are wanted and are capable you are sent into the second class, with the aristocrats of the game.

First class: Bombing machines, biplane or triplane, large wings.

Observation machines, large wings.

Liaison machines, large wings — the latter used in direct contact with the advance of the infantry to foretell the ground and the enemy's forces during the attack.

The first class is at the mercy of the more speedy, one-place, fighting machines that make up the *second class*. They have a short wing spread — a place for the pilot only who shoots his own gun and has the duty of swooping down on the enemy's machines of Class I and killing their occupants and riddling up the machine with bullets. They are, of course, fired on by those of Class I, but their suppleness in manœuvring and their speed gives them the advantage of the duel. You see, the first-class machines are not meant to fight or duel or chase except in defense. Sometimes machines of the first class are protected by those of the second — the duel machines; sometimes they fly in fleets, sometimes alone. They consist of the most dangerous service and of the less praise from the public. To receive a duel machine is almost a reward, since you then attain a right to the throne of a public hero or, in aviation terms, of becoming an "ace," with a few German machines on your list of victories that steadily increase along with medals and praise and stripes, if — if you've got the steel and keep your nerve.

It's all very dangerous; I want you to fully realize that fact, and am not attempting to hide it from you. Statistics show that fifty per cent never come back from their soarings in the skies of glory. In the offensive of Champagne, eight aviators out of ten were killed. But inasmuch as it is usually a question of brains, and cool-

headedness and concentration, I think you can be fully confident in me.

One very nice thing, *all* my camion section is in the aviation and will all train and fly and risk together. It is wonderful to think that for three years some twenty boys who went to school together, and learned of football, studies, and jokes; that they crossed the ocean together and disembarked on a foreign land; that there they explored the country and cities together; that they went into the camion service and received their "baptême du feu" together; that after a fourth of a year of that they went to training camp and learned to use wings and smile at danger together; that they then flew in the great war, for its duration together; and that crossing back to America together they returned arm in arm to a wide horizon of peace — tinted with the undying warming glow of glory and stirred with the luring breezes of a successful future.

I realize fully how brave you are and want you near me to make things easier and to save you much supplementary worrying and fretting you certainly do not deserve.

Most lovingly your devoted

JACK

Tours, France, September 11, 1917
Permitted by Censor

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER: —

I don't know just what to say to you — I don't know just what to say to myself! I have arrived at

camp and don't know what to make of it. At least nothing has ever made me wonder more; so I guess it must be big and have more than a mechanical side to it; in fact I think that like any other very deep pleasure, you can only enjoy the more as you go along.

My trip down was gay and we arrived in Tours very happy to discover ourselves so near civilization, for camp is a short auto ride from the city. It is situated on a big plain where a rare bit of woods and a few houses break the horizon. The sky occupies most everything of the view and it takes you a couple of days to get used to its brightness. It's like being on the ocean.

The camp is large and comfortable, with German prisoners, Moroccans, Senegalese, and Annamite, to build them up and perfect them. A large restaurant-canteen with a piano is handy; mechanics tend to the numerous machines off in the large brown hangars. Some women make the beds, cook and wash the dishes — real dishes; while a barber, a tailor, a bath house, are all on the grounds. Most of the pupils are American; the instruction, instructors (called "monitors") and high officers are French. With a few extras, such as trucks, ambulances, signal posts, etc., you have the whole outfit.

We get up at 5 A.M. (awful), have breakfast and get out to the field by 6.30 when we start flying until 9.30; you see the heat is bad for flying. Then we have a lecture until 10.30 and lunch at 11. From 11 to 3 P.M. we have absolute rest, and, believe me, we need it! I have found out that flying is going to be not only tiring but strenuous. Every day two trucks leave for town

and let you wander around Tours at your ease until 3.30 when we have "goûter." At 4 we have lecture until 4.30; then we fly until 7.30 and eat at 8.15. We usually climb into bed immediately afterwards; though we can stay out all night if we wish; but that is absolute insanity if a man does n't intend to smash his machine up the next day.

There is more than the main field to fly on, and each field has its share of spectators which on Sunday crowd around the fences in colors of pink shirt-waists and black coats or uniforms with carriages here and there in the shade. Yesterday P.M. two nice girls came out and took our photos (being on a smaller field they could approach), which pleased us all and them too, until, by mistake, they got behind a propeller when a machine went off, which gave them good cause to blush, seeing that the propeller shoots back a whirlwind strong enough to blow you off your balance.

You have to go through numerous schools. First you just follow the movements of your pilot; then he lets you gradually take control until he perfects you in the landing school. Landing is the most delicate of all flying. Then you go into the solo class; then the spiral, the triangle, and finally, graduate at the end of a time proportionate with the weather, and receive your First Lieutenant's commission.

The first few days we watched others go up; it was interesting for the time, but we did n't learn much. However, from the very start we have all been feeling great and a fine current of comradeship circulates as

never I have seen, especially in America. You could n't help feeling great out here, excepting that you 're continually sleepy.

The first evening I walked from the dinner table out about twenty yards to where stretched the main field, and where, forbidden sight, men came swooping down or went soaring up almost within hand's reach. What I had found such a rare treat in the movies was now going on before my eyes in reality; but I could hardly believe that this was actually the heroic, dreadful, sublime aviation school and that these mere boys who came joking along with their big helmets in one hand were not more than the mere puppets of actual student-pilots. Was it possible that this boy whom I had studied Latin with, and this kid, smiling in his poilu's coat was the man of to-day, and the one on whom the Government was spending a little fortune that within a few months he might be one of those most vital single factors in the war? That Bill was conquering the air, and that all of them could do so much was quite beyond me. But then I felt myself grow bigger; I knew that never had I faced such danger, and yet I was not afraid. Before I had been frightened by exams, matches, people, but now I felt myself to rise above fear through the immensity of nobleness that such danger invoked.

We received our private's uniform which gives you the feeling of ye ancient knight in armor. We received also our aviator's uniform — leather coat, "trow" helmet, goggles, fur-lined gloves, sweater and knit hat, all of which is very imposing.

One morning the Lieutenant assigned us to a monitor. We packed into a truck with some fifteen other boys and made for one of the auxiliary fields. These auto rides are full of impression. Each boy has a face such as you would only find out of three hundred boys at school. Every face is strong-set and chiseled by Volonté and Ideals. Very few are "nuts," as the French claim you have to be, for this stuff. It is enough to set you going for a week just to glance around at those you have for companions and know that they'll be your friends through the months of war ahead.

We got out on the field and waited for the monitor with the machine. During that time a peasant (American, by the way) brought out bread, jam, milk, and pears to us, which we ate while the gigantic sun in a disc of orange came up over the purple slate roof of a peasant house. Then one, two, and two more planes hummed through the air, came out of the tinted morning skies and shutting off their motors came gliding down, swooped over our heads and landed, some with a little jarring. The pupils gathered around their teachers and some put on their helmets for flight.

Here is a curious incident: We arrived on Friday; I wear 13 on my wrist; we are 13 in the class; and I fly on machine No. 13. That's good luck in France.

Now I have been here four days, and though the Americans are good, have seen four accidents, of which one might have proved fatal, since he cut the wings off on some trees and spiked head first into the road. They don't let you get near the machine, though, for

the sight of a friend hurt or killed would be bad for a beginner. I have a friend here who saw a double smash-up and death, and he has n't been the same since. He's less indifferent and much more sympathetic.

I'll rest awhile now.

Thursday

I now find that I must avoid all sentimentality. Since my first whack at the controls, I have discovered that aviation, at first, in the learning, necessitates an absolute annulment of emotion, sensitiveness, imagination, etc.; not only when two thousand metres up in space, but all day long one must cultivate low-down materialism. All one's senses and imaginations must be dulled. Therefore I will merely sketch to you my impression on my first flight. It will be the only sentimentality I can allow myself.

Going off the ground is slowly seeing the peasant houses and yards below you, until you seem to own them as toys; then under the setting sun you realize yourself miles up in the air, hanging in space by two thin wings and slowly progressing by the deafening motor and mad propeller, over the woodland villages blurred in the rose dusk of sunset. Your machine will dip on a wing and then rise face to the big glow of that setting sun over the infinite horizon hills. Face to this gigantic hearth of red light, you suddenly realize that the space you are floating in is a breathing medium — a vast, colossal god in whose arms you are lying as a speck in the infinite. Then it comes upon you that

your wings are too small; that the nervous whirling and pounding of the engine and propeller in front of you is a vain attempt; that it is merely a mechanic fashioned by man, able to fail! That it vainly attempts to rise in a forbidden world inasmuch as through the fathoms of sunset space about you are forces vast and unknown — calm now, but in a second, fiercer than any human-explored cyclones or waves or landslides; forces far beyond those that trail around the earth and that are only the droppings-off of those main big elements of space, the ones that fashioned the spheres and the comets and the ones that can juggle and destroy the multitudinous worlds in their embrace. You feel that man cannot challenge these higher fundamentals — these unknown mediums — and that your motor that attempts constantly to rise on the little wings far above their mother earth are vain, fragile, and ready at any moment to slide, snap, and be crumpled as a bit of paper, along with you. That is the general impression I gathered through ten minutes of first flight.

A couple of dips took the stomach out of me, made my ears feel funny, and made me feel like having a bottle of extra "peppy" champagne shoot to my head. Those dips were the only positive physical sensations. Rising is inspiring; gliding down to earth is restful after the strain, but you feel sorry when your wheels once again "taxi" you across the field.

The next day I had my second flight. Already we were allowed to take the main control, once in the air. I came down with the conviction that I could never

make an aviator. My first attempt at the wheel of a car did not leave me without less than great hopes, but I felt myself impossible to ever be able to hang correctly in space and tend to all the necessaries at once, when at the slightest mistake you were finished. I was not afraid at all, but most unconfident in the least bit of a future.

However, when I got down I decided that the next time my turn came to get on my helmet and climb in, I would take that "manche à balai" and swing that machine around to the gale as I d—— pleased, making myself at home and sure, or that I would, in attempting it, break my neck. I was bent on flying or nothing. That night I impatiently slept off the few hours to 5 A.M. But it rained a little and we could n't go up. The next day (that's this A.M.) I went out and waited my turn while the sun came up and separated all the clouds and prospects of bad weather. I got in, we tested the motor, and off. The sun shone bright and I said to myself as though in a hammock, "Fine day to-day; the country will look pleasant. We'll enjoy the trip. Ah! We're up. I was getting bored with the earth!" I waited for the signal. Finally, at two hundred metres, after passing over another plane, my pilot tapped me on the back. I took the controls and calmly remembered what I was to guide by. For rocking, the top of the front top plane and the horizon. For level of flight, the vertical position of the reënforcement bars up and down between the front wings. (All machines, practically, are biplanes to-day.) The weather was calm — no "bumps" — no "pockets." I was running the old boat as I had intended

to — like a man. When the trip was over, the results were accomplished. Between confident running of the plane or smash-up, I had gained the former — and, *believe me,* how I did enjoy it. Now I must go ahead, for I have much to learn and resist and conquer, inasmuch as I intend to make an aviator.

Yesterday the men got three months' pay and turned Tours upside down. Now I'll do a little outside studying.

I enclose a picture of my "rookies" suit that I'll be wearing the next few months while I'm in the learning. Afterwards, I'll have an officer's garb, but one starts at the beginning even in this service, and I'm glad.

Most lovingly, from your devoted aviator

JACK

September 17, 1917

MY DEAR FRIEND DICK: —

I don't know just about what you are doing now, or what a parallel your life is making with mine. Doubtless you are on the verge of something, for you could not remain idle long. As for me, I am becoming quite French; the only time I despise them is when a "Parisienne" turns me down. I can add that the "Parisienne," therefore, don't give you much chance to despise. They are very patriotic and receive their new allies with open hearts and open arms.

But now I am far from Paris, in the historical and aerial town of Tours. Were I to live long, I would surely gain possession of one of these low, dark, ancient houses, where crouched and heavy arches lead through corri-

dors of mystery. However, I am not entirely exiled from civilization; and after an early morning flight, I don my student-pilot's badge and uniform and take a ride to town. There, cafés and theatres, though somewhat provincial, still await me, and even other welcomes, whose provinciality renders all their charm. We have a lot of them to ourselves and usually have lunch down town and pass around until flying time in the P.M. In the evening, now and then, the boys go down for a show and come back for flying, next morning. We get up at five, for early morning and late afternoon are our working hours, but the work is better than play.

Yesterday afternoon, for instance, we rode out to my class field, and as one by one our planes swooped down and awaited us, one by one, peasants of the neighborhood, a car or two from a nearby château and a flock of little birds (such as could show you the way to inspiration) crowded along the side lines and formed a gauntlet of wondrous eyes and silent admiration, which we somewhat awkwardly, but very gladly, accepted. Somehow, you know, wherever I go I seem to be crowned by some new-born halo and pass from respectful crowds to adoring arms. It all seems a dream!

Well, a few jokes mingled the crowd together. A couple of girls promised me their stockings to wear over my head when I fly, and I was soon assured of the quality of silk they would be when the girlies got behind a propeller just starting up its blast of wind. So the evening passed. I would chatter French and giggle and — well, you know. Then I would climb into the machine, the

mechanics would start her up, and as Midinette and Parisette would throw some flowers at me, I would be off in a whirlwind, turn around the field and mount the air, just above their heads, waving back a temporary farewell. Then the houses would shrink; the wheels of the plane would still be turning, but in space, would be hanging in space, mounting higher in space, dominating more pastures and roads, hills and towns, till they all seemed but petty toilings and dabblings of innumerable bourgeois. High was I! Level with any eagle and glad to be rid of earth and its boredome, its heaviness, its chains. Then I would bank and swing 'round to the west, face with the blazing furnace of the setting sun — roaring straight into its fecund womb, sending the motor and propeller to the highest pitch of their speed and wind and thundering, feel the rush through my veins of some of the unknown ether of space, some of the forces, of the mediums far above and around, that fashion globes and meteors, feel myself a god, partly rising in potentiality, partly gaining eternity, thousands of feet above men.

Well, I would feel the "monitor" push on my back for me to come down, then a turn — the field was in sight, and giving the controls to the "monitor" who would shut off the motor, I could distinguish the crowd and the boys and the planes as we glided to earth — skimmed it and then, once again, felt its sod take hold of our wheels with its chains and once again we would rumble across the campus back to the side lines.

Next, my boy, is an unexaggerated, fact-for-fact ac-

count of an afternoon's flying. Of course, we don't fly every afternoon or every morning. It often rains and the barracks of young heroes become the haunts of gloomy faces, lights and pens. But otherwise, the boys are seconds. In the morning as I reach the field with the rising sun, I often think of going down to New London beach in the morning's brisk air and early sunlight and I contemplate how it would have been to stride down to the beach for your morning flight, 'midst all your friends, instead of a bath. And such things will be true, for I've got good reasons to stick to aviation. During the morning, only little children, a good American lady with food for us, and some cows crowd around us, but it is all very pleasant and quiet. The little girls and boys will scramble on to our knees and chatter to us between minutes, of life and death high up in space. We will tramp around in the wet dew, pick berries and fruit from Mother Nature and breathe in all the inspiration she can give us — the dew, ripened fruit, the grass and the air, all is saturated with morning perfume and we are happy to do our work in quiet communion with deep, silent Nature.

Then comes a ride to the barracks in a car, and we have our second meal. We eat four times a day, which is, at least, very interesting to me. Some adventure at Tours in middle of the day and a lecture or two, and we fly again in the P.M.; and so on, the weeks through, in a continuous passing and re-passing of happy hours, gay adventures, high inspirations, and always the fine life that fine boys put together are sure to bring out.

Does none of that tempt you? Does none of that surpass your present hours of would-be romance, would-be freedom, and would-be happiness in America? Of course, one thing we have not. I have no time to let my imagination wander, or my sensitiveness wallow in baths of perfume, or my poetry to murmur its symphony, or my fantastic dreams to weave their fanciful spider webs — none of that. It would be deathly poison to me, for in my new game I must cultivate a cold indifference to danger and a cold determination to conquer. Were I to let my imagination or my artistic feelings loose for one second, up in the air, I would be lost. My first flight was a passenger one, and luckily, for it just taught me in time that anyhow life was to be void for the present of all supersensitiveness.

It is a great expanse of activity, positive accomplishments, action, real dreams, adventure, romance, speed, concentration, nerve, and a wide opening for glory; it is, therefore, through such elements as these, a horizon that no man could call an image and that no man should be so hypnotized as not to fight to obtain. That is why I am putting it up to you.

You think it is void of Art? My boy, IT is the Art — the living Art; not the dream of a poem, but the realization of it; the standing statue, the breathing masterpiece.

And later on, when I become thoroughly at home above the clouds, when I'm back in America, I'll find more time to paint on the side, things that have never been painted, and explore with my muse the rhythm

and power of regions unexplored. Secret: I intend to become the Poet of the Airs; of course, it is not merely a question of eternal soaring; now and then, two or three of us will get serious and mention death, but we get rid of it hurriedly, knowing that the world won't stop turning around when we do, and the rest of the time death is the general joke of the day; it makes us laugh, and it takes on quite a sporty disguise; nevertheless, it is there — always present — even when I would be listening by soft feminine locks the whispering of "Comme nous sommes heureux ensemble" — just so, the next morning with the early sunrise, might I pass from such happiness forever. Therefore, in urging you, I also am warning you; but once in the game, you'll find that usually death serves as a stimulant to the vitality of life and daring of flying. (I distinguish life as usually understood and flying — it is exact.)

Well, think it over — form a philosophy, create a fancy, realize a necessity, do *something*, and then join, for I'm sure your decision would not — could not be the contrary. At least, if you are as I know you — Richard Mansfield II.

Now it's a rainy day, the mandolins are a-tingle amongst the little military cots, and denseness of cigarette smoke makes their soft caressing of forgotten ragtime bring you back to the old, funny-seeming cabarets of Broadway. How distant they now seem; how blurred the faces of American beauty and the lights of American gayety; how foggy, through this cigarette smoke, here on the field in France, do those ancient

symbols of peculiar joys and days forgotten come peering back at me — tempting me with homesickness, but only strengthening my desire to drink deeper of France — her joy, her sympathy — and her Great War. I am young, and Youth is here! Now, then, it is a rainy day. I will go over to the little café across the way, see a friend aviator or two; salute a uniform, smile at a maid or two, and with a tall glass of black coffee and a volume of Verlaine muse at the big, low hangars crouching along the field in the rain and contemplate the hour or two away until the car leaves for town.

Good-bye, and until then I'll remember you to all the little Touraine maidens. They'll surely want to be more than remembered to you — just because they're French.

So long, Dick, ol' sport.

JACK

September 24, 1917

DEAR MOTHER: —

In the midst of boys coming back from the day's flying, throwing their helmets on to their cots with their leather coats — and falling down on top of the whole or ducking under the cold water faucet —

I was interrupted by the dinner bell. Now it's the next morning. I'm just back from the morning's work. Now I'm practically running the old boat except for some corrections now and then on the end of the landings which are the hardest parts of flying.

Tours was lost in a fog this morning and around the

two black cathedral towers but a few roofs glinted in the vague sunlight. The river ran its silver into the fog, making the whole look like a bay.

I'm enjoying flying more and more. I can't get enough of it. Each time I come down I remain silently enraptured with its voluptuousness, for a long while, until once again it is my turn.

I feel a little shiver (for I'm still that way until the motor starts up) and then the monitor in the front seat puts his hand on the side of the bathtub, coffin, side car — whatever you will call it — gets the flag signal to leave and shakes his hand straight ahead; I pull back on the gas lever — the motor pounds like a battery of artillery — the handle-stick (manche à balai) pushes hard on your hand and with a few manœuvres the machine is skimming the ground — leaving it — mounting higher.

We're off some hundred yards above the ground with the wind to fight with and give "pep" to it all, for the sun is up and air pockets are frequent. They make you drop — they boost you up like a tin plate — they whack one wing and tip you — they give you a wonderful tussle.

I've had four and one-half hours now and will be ready for landing school in a half-hour or so. That lasts a day or two, then I'll be "lâche" or "soloing" — sailing around by myself — visiting the château country by the third dimension.

I have just finished "Madame Bovary" (Flaubert). It is, as you know, recognized as the strongest novel in

history and I have n't gotten over it yet. It sure is a beautiful slam at the bourgeois — Flaubert's lifelong enemies. When reading it I was happy to know that I was not a bourgeois, that I was not a feeble dreamer with dreams never realized, even completed or specified, but that just outside were the beautiful birds of paradise which I could make lead me to real idealism, and, as now and then an aero-motor would start up, it would set up a current of satisfaction through me, for I knew that I was realizing my dreams and living my art, and it all made me smile as I would return to feeble Madame Bovary and her oppressing bourgeois.

I am very tired, so I won't write you long. I'm ashamed not to have written before, but really, we get awfully lazy and just snore all day long.

I have to go to lecture now. We smoke in there and have general discussion. It seems a scandal compared to school classes. At night we go out with the lecturers. It's a social crime.

I'll answer some of your questions: I had a number of very interesting war trophies, but along with three-fourths of my belongings they disappeared completely while I was "on permission."

Our studio in Paris is occupied by an "embusqué" French officer who uses it for a den to celebrate the victory in. Bright orange tapestries, black wickerwork and shining brass have turned it from a spacious chapel of work into a crowded boudoir.

I have not seen any one but Toussaint, a second, always smiling and deaf. Bourdelle I have told you

about; Madame Rose a little more cheerful and Sevastos a little more curious and simple. The concierge I paid little attention to; the Impasse is just as dirty. A few extra dogs make it more active. The court is damp, mossy, and quiet, with the big, still studio windows opening on the blue sky.

The object of your sculpture "Call of the Clouds" seems indefinite and a call that would attract more the dreamer of fifteen who has not the books and relations to sacrifice that you say you put at his feet. If it is in view of an aviator, it is different. The idea is original and probably came from your lying on your back and gazing at those clouds whose novelty struck you, since in the city one never sees them unless on the ferryboat.

The idea is so original and startling that it can be made very powerful if given more definitism — n'est-ce pas?

Sculpture is already almost as indefinite as music — an indefinite subject would hurt it considerably.

But this "Call of the Clouds" interests me considerably. Since I have gone into aviation, I have been temporarily forced to abandon Art; as a result I don't know as much as I used to up at school, and my opinion is vague and lazy, but I do wish you to tell me the development of this monument.

Please don't be so much of a woman as not to get interested in your interest and to not carry it out fully.

It seems an odd subject for sculpture and yet one that would be better for sculpture than anything else.

I carry the "porte-bonheur" you sent me when I fly.

I am glad you realized that I could have an increase of allowance. Can you make it definite? It is important, so that's why I insist. I've found that comfort is more important than I thought, and distraction, too, since I have been on the job flying. I not only need it, but must have it, from the smallest detail of milk up to the joy rides and dinners and a theatre show now and then. I have not received candy nor cigarettes, nor soap, nor safety-pins from you, and only need the first two, though I thank you for all those attentions.

As yet I have seen no battles and don't wish you to say I have. A battle is far different from the artillery joking I've come in contact with.

I think I told you that I received my "student-pilot" badge from the French Government and I wear it proudly, counting it fully equal to a medal. It's a silver wreath with a silver wing and a silver star and is worn on the right chest pocket.

Now and always understand me as very loving and considerate.

Affectionately

JACK

26 *September*, 1917

VERY DEAR MOTHER: —

Having just received two very worrisome letters from you, I answer immediately.

First: You have worried about a good many things since April 28th. It is now September 26th and none

of the worrying has, so far, done any good. The subjects of worry just come out good by themselves. Now, of course, some kind fairy, knowing your merits, has done all that for you, and intends to keep things straight; so just let the fairy work of its own accord.

Now you reproach me mainly of, first, not telling you definitely about my affair in Paris; second, not giving you specific details about the Aviation Corps and which corps I was entering. Well, first, I told you at the moment, that I could not say the least more about my affair in Paris, for "Taisez-vous, Méfiez-vous, Des oreilles ennemies vous écoutent." Now I cannot yet explain, but will soon.

Nothing in the way of a scandal has taken place. It has merely to do with some organizations and everything is now perfect — in no way have I ever come near a bad tangent to that honor which I have so far held sacred for my sake and that of my family line.

Third: I did not, at first, tell you which aviation corps I had joined or anything else concerning it, so as to be ready to resist any attempt on your part to keep me out of it. Now that I have your consent, I can tell you everything that the censor will permit, and that much have I done. Beyond those limits I, inasmuch as I am to become one of the officers of our Army, cannot give to *any one* the information that has naturally been intrusted to me. Besides, such details, technique, etc., would not weigh much in appeasing maternal worrying. It is more about my health, etc., that you are upset, and about the such I can talk to you freely.

We have an American doctor and a French dentist for our use. Our laundry we pay for; also clothing repairs. When we become officers, we'll have to pay for all clothing, orderly-work, and a thousand other details.

As to my spirits, you can fully realize my enthusiasm, as shown in my letters.

As to finance — I did n't have sufficient an allowance; I asked for more and explained why; you kindly agreed to increase it and, my dear mother, I more than agree to thank you for that decision. If there is any souvenir you would like from France, in return, I am here to fulfill your wishes. I am sending you some magazines, the most practical souvenir on account of shipping risks and I hope you receive all.

I am in the American Aviation — the only one. We are to have the most wonderful of all machines. I know something of what types and something of further perfecting-training and something of what kind of a machine *I'll* get, but I cannot tell you.

There are so many multitudes of "embusqués" — it makes me sick. In no other country have I heard of the thousands of ways possible to get out of the real fight.

I've got a slight grippe, so I'm wearing the pink muffler of Elaine, around my neck, and it seems funny, for while hearing the airplanes roar over the barracks, her face is comical 'midst the wings of death and adventure — her pink muffler funny around my blood-red veins.

I wish you'd persuade H. to get over here. It would

give him the necessary push and manliness to succeed — at least to succeed in America.

Now I close — much, much love.

JACK

September 29, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER: —

When under the sun are you going to get over here! The planes are still flying all right, and I'm getting impatient to get advanced through the school. If an accident of some account would only come around it might calm me down, but just now I feel bold and brave and over-confident. Of course there are from two to six smash-ups a day, but those are all in solo classes and I don't see them; besides, no one ever gets hurt, so you don't even hear about them.

Yesterday evening a peasant kid on a bike was following our camion, which, by mistake, threw over on the road and sent him flying against a tree which broke his neck. I spoke to him, but though he tried, he could not answer, so we had to let him die without his parents.

Landing class is great fun. My new monitor (the fourth I've had) is a little husky Southerner. He used to be a prize-fighter and is therefore a thoroughbred aviator.

The other day two medical officers, a Major and a Captain, wanted to go up, put on some clothes and started trembling as though they were in the trenches. The Major told the monitors that he wanted a short

ride with no tricks. The officers got in — white, waxen, paralyzed. Well, the monitors winked at us, and in a twinkling, those two machines were doing stunts in the air, from "looping" to "sea-sicking." I don't think by the looks of the Major and Captain, when they landed, that many more medical officers will go up again. But I'm pretty positive that if we could only give a few senators and law-makers a ride, we'd be getting that one hundred dollars a month that all the men get who are training in officers' camps in America. We are very peeved, that being under the same conditions, only more dangerous, training the same for officership, we do not get that one hundred dollars a month. That is the only grudge we've got on the Government. Of course, though, once away from home, you're usually more or less slighted, so we take it as Fate and laugh it off.

As I was saying, landing class is fun. In ten minutes you have to make seven landings up and back the long field. The only trouble is that as soon as a partridge is sighted within a few miles' radius, school stops immediately; the monitors jump in their machines and run down the birds, catching them in the wires and coming back with a great feed. Talking about "running down," — yesterday a monitor saw a car run into a woman and then speed up to get away. He came back to a hangar, took out a machine, flew just over the road, caught up with the auto, made the owner turn around, and come back to pay his debt. It's just great to be an aviator! But you can only fly in case there's no wind, no rain, no heat, no fog, no snow, or hail, or

anything else, and then you can't always fly; machines and parts lack terribly. We've just ordered fifty new ones ($150,000) for the place, but they won't be here for Kingdom come. We'll all be dead and forgotten by that time. Except for one friend, Eternity, he says he'll keep our memory up and put fresh flowers where we dropped.

There's not so much doing out of the ordinary these days, but when I get to "solo" I'll have my own experiences to relate and shall try and make them just as active as possible, so as to more amuse the folks at home.

Does America realize she's at war yet?

Much love

JACK

1 *October*, 1917

DEAR MUZZIE: —

Tours is a very attractive town. Opening her streets to the warm sunlight of a calm and majestic country, she partakes herself of something of the surroundings and interweaving meadows and poplar trees, mists and wallowing cattle. Her big cathedral and her river bind her forever to God and Nature, while just off the busy hum of la rue Nationale, its concerts and cafés, still crowd together and overlap, the tile roofs, the bulging plastered walls hiding dwarf-like, winding stairway, doors, tunnels; still squirms in obscureness and filth a vast labyrinth of the Mediæval Ages with but the geraniums of a few balconies and a rare ray of sunlight

to spot it now and then with a glance of truth and happiness.

Along the river-bank is a small palisades with a broad hotel front now and then, multitudinous windows open to the sky, and big cushions of trees turning to rust. Far out of the town a crossing of tracks and an invisible railroad station tell you that the boulevards and embassies of Paris are only four hours at the most away.

Its character, I forget, but it's very naïve in the country and therefore very soothing and very simple in the city, and therefore very despairing. In fact, the only fun I get out of the city is in making it what it is not. In breaking up the theatre shows, singing better than the concert singer at the concerts, and owning all the waiters and cochers along the rue Nationale and the "Place."

A few dens sprinkled here and there in the obscure mediæval houses, a few garden parties laid amongst the bright châteaux, complete the fun, but it's all too small. It does n't level up with the other half of my life-aviation. This morning I got another ten minutes' landing practise. Coming back I was with the wind and landed about 150 kilometres an hour, so fast that it was hard to judge your height when settling down on the grass.

It's awfully cold flyin' these brisk but golden autumn days. And the cows won't get out of the way. Nor the people either, when you feint a landing right on them. They just stand frozen on the field admiring you, and when you land, all the little "Tourangelles," the girls from Tours, just "Ah!" and "Oh!" at you by the hour.

Why, when our truck goes through town you would think that the glorious dream of Napoleon's or Alexander's armies marching into Cairo or Alexandria, whilst women hailed them from their balconies and threw flowers on their path, had come true; for when we pass, the little ladies rush out to the street and the more beautiful ones cheer to us from their dainty balconies and holler "Les Américains! — Je vous adore!" And even down to the little gutter-urchins does the street along our way ring behind and ahead of us with "Vive nos Américains!" I'll get scared and think my job dangerous if the ladies keep up such cheering and the girls such smiles of praise out on the field. It's real fun; no novel reading, but the real stuff.

2 October

DEAREST MOTHER: —

Flying went rotten this morning. I'm away behind in my class on account of the landings. Aviation gives you extremes, either joy or "the blues," so I guess it's a pretty big service, bigger than the camions.

To-day our truck lived up to its nickname of the "hearse" by killing a dog.

Talk about feeling discouraged. I don't need to fret so much, for I'm intent on either making a good flier or a good fighter. One can always go out and fight better than other fliers and until you're "popped" beat them in reputation. Guynemer, the greatest aeronaut of the war, can't make (I mean could n't) a good land-

ing yet, and took one hundred hours to go through this school.

Bill is flying alone now and is trying to persuade himself he's in love. In fact everybody seems to be in love but me. Since the war came on, everybody has a sweetheart. I've never had one, but I don't seem to be bored with life half so much and I seem to get a good deal more out of characters and events.

Yesterday a rumor of peace swept the barracks, and I felt real sorry. All my adventures seemed to fade. America looked oppressive and barren. Once again I came back to France. Now and then a picture of Paris brings me back too. I'd like to go to Italy, though.

I had something to tell you. I forgot — Oh! yes. I always was a city lover; being broke now, I feel quite lonesome without even little Tours. But I'll be on my feet again in a couple of weeks. I've had about six hours of flying now, only get too imaginative once in a while in the air, and hope to perfect my landings enough this afternoon to be "lâche" — thrown on to wings alone. I have shop work this P.M. and will learn a lot of excellent practical work, then "goûter," then flying, then home again — dinner, bed.

You'll get some pictures soon, but I'm not taking any now, for there's nothing of interest.

Life is very stupid; not enough flying! — too lazy to work at anything, forbid myself any art, not tired enough to sleep, broke so that I can't go to town. I'm a damned fool altogether, and live like a bourgeois or a college boy, from minute to minute — ideas stuffed up,

no thought, inspiration, souvenirs, or hope. Terribly indifferent, hoggishly lazy, criminally conscious of the whole.

Good afternoon

JACK

October 12, 1917

DEAREST MOTHER: —

A long time since I've written you. Well, the time's been longer for me. We have n't been flying at all hardly. In other words, I've been learning the chief occupation of aviation school — seeing the country, being broke, indulging in laziness so beautifully that everything bores you but flying. Nevertheless, in spite of a week and a half without seeing a machine outside of the hangar, I've been able to get in enough time to get through landing school and am now ready to pilot a machine through the air alone. That means that at the next break Nature makes and lets the sun out, the rain away, and the wind down, with the fog up, I'll be out to jump into the big excitement of school work. Your first "solo-hop."

I don't know whether I've told you that I'm in a room with three others. Bill, Jack, and Bruce (a man and a writer, an excellent camp companion). My favorite rainy-day occupation is a side track of my general Beelzebubic life. Writing letters to juggle friends, mix up circumstances and conditions, churn politics with psychology, and get my mail, a little more exciting, bringing definite messages of broken hearts, simple re-

searches, unveiling characters, threats of vengeance, and a defeat or victory here and there and all around.

All my sweethearts are breaking off with me! It 's so annoying, for I'll just have to waste a week getting new ones. Now isn't that the serious life for a man who should be contemplating the thousand and one inspirations that aviation outpours through its divine channels to a man!

But you see, were it not for my frivolities, I would either be thinking all the time of flying, either extending my artistic sensibilities, either doing nothing at all. The first would result in insanity, the second in a fatal mood of supersensitiveness some nine thousand feet off earth, which would quickly save me the trouble of becoming sensitive again. The latter would result in idiocy. Therefore, instead of those three, I chose a fourth — slightly better — that of frivolity which makes a man laugh, more human, somewhat rusé and experienced according to his vanity — and a good companion, according to others.

You say you like Science better than Fiction, for Fiction is all unrealities. I doubt it. As to the surface of Fiction: Characters and habits, those may be unreal, but these characters and habits are only means of approaching the reader through a channel of comprehension most natural to him — that of his fellowmen and their actions, to the greater truths of life, outstanding in every good novel. For it is only for the form of persons that the author claims a demand of interest — not the reality of them. And it is through

this form — human characters and their actions — that the author shows how life is beautiful — brings forth with the lives of his characters, as history with the lives of nations, the truths of nature — the philosophies of life and the many factors that go to make the life of man so beautiful and even to show it the way to heaven.

Of course all novels do not aim mostly at an aspect of life — a view of heaven, an ideal, or a disdain. Some get deeply interested in their characters, sympathize with the heroes and shudder at the villains, their baseness. Those novels tend to make you understand those about you better, to make you appreciate their delicacies of soul, and to realize that man's day-to-day life, with all its materialism is a great, quivering harp with high notes and low ones all a-tremble of a gigantic Fairyland.

Novels, then, where the chief interests of the author are his characters, are novels for the heart — they cultivate appreciation. Novels where there is an interest from the author to show a truth in life and nature and opening to heaven or hell, are novels for the soul — they tend to direct in the channels of philosophy towards an ideal — high or low.

Well, you have read some of Flaubert: You don't like his "Éducation Sentimentale"; evidently you did n't see in every detail the general truth of the whole. That in every act of the boy, you did n't see the germ of bourgeoisie, tending to destroy the first boyish ideals — high and worthy — until, losing little by little the ambition to carry them out or the appreciation of the

spiritual at all, the only bit of light he had left was the souvenir of away back in his first promising days of youth and ideals — but what souvenir? That of his ideals — his dreams? No! a souvenir of a mediocre palpitation of passion — of mediocre tangency to life, but a tangency nevertheless, for the once and only time.

You did n't see Flaubert all the way through, fighting his enemy as a crusader — for a religion. Flaubert fighting bourgeoisie — abhorring it — trying, through the decadence of the boy's idealism into base materialism, to damn bourgeoisie in the face of all his readers.

Not only was Flaubert appealing to your heart to appreciate the palpitations, the flux and reflux, harmonies and discords of his characters, but was he begging of your soul to spur itself away from bourgeoisie. I also note that of all Flaubert's works you have not read that book which has made him the author of the strongest novel of contemporaneous literature — "Madame Bovary."

You say you are reading Baudelaire. I am sorry. He is not one of my idols. He is just a satisfier for certain moods — a bible for the wicked; and one can only be wicked by moods, without becoming voluntarily insane, like the author.

To read him you must first read a sketch of his life, and realize that the man voluntarily, through his supreme sensitiveness, went dopy, sensitive outrageously, insane. He became a wreck and enjoyed it. He grinned at his carcass and the haunt of approaching death. He found beauty in it (the most wonderful and correct of

Baudelaire's achievements). He wrote madly when convulsions and dizziness and pain never left him, and in his dying bed, glorified in the news that he had contracted a malady the physicians could not solve — something beyond their science — something new, deliciously eccentric. But I'm sorry you're reading Baudelaire. Unless one fully realizes what they're running into and has a complete bird's-eye view of the man, his life, and his work, they are liable to get mixed up between the beauty of his lines and their own concentration, and not seeing much of a horizon in general, soon get mixed up in the details, until they feel they've been reading Nietszche for a sermon the last century or two.

Besides Baudelaire is more of a curiosity — the psychological specimen of a dangerous beauty — than an idol. He was the starter of the new musical school, but I doubt if he knew so. It probably came unconsciously through his love of sound. Don't read Baudelaire unless you want to go mad. Now I suppose you surely will.

Well, I expect to get some "argent" soon and get some food and adventure.

One fellow is ringing (I mean banging) a banjo in my left ear — the second, Bill, is whistling rag-time like a freight whistle in my right ear, and a third is chewing an apple, like a yard of swine at one trough, in both ears at once, so good-night before I become Baudelaire, his poems and an aviator; in other words, the foam in raging and hydrophobia in foam.

Bonne nuit et bon baiser

JACK

Aviation School
October 15, 1917

WELL, DEAREST, —

How is the sunshine in New York this afternoon? Here the sky is blue-gray, full of rain, excepting in the west where a firmament of gold reflects its rays over a favored blotch of Touraine landscape — the poplar trees and the rusty roofed houses 'midst their orchards, and elevates with its golden mist this mirage of country into regions divine as the mist of a halo sheds a heavenly grace on the face of a painting.

Outside of heaven there's also been a little hell, just to make the world go round. That is — I've flown alone! I've made my first "solo-hop." How I came out, how I felt, my impressions — I don't know. Ask some blind man, some crazy man, some dying man — he could tell you far better. I myself know nothing about it, either how I went, why I went, or where I went.

When "reveille" sounded this morning, and I looked out on a clear day, I knew that the biggest moment of school work had come — the dreaded first "hop" alone.

I had been so filled with scarey tales and wild descriptions that I did n't have any imagination left to get scared on myself, so when I got out to the long-envied solo field, I took a look at the sky as usual, put on my gloves, and climbed in. The thing that bothered me most, so material I had become, was that the seat was n't very comfortable.

Then the chief pilot showed me the direction, and

before I knew it (just like at the dentist's) they had the motor on. Where was my monitor, why was n't he in the machine? Oh — it's to be all done alone by myself — to hang in space by myself — well, "Remember I like lilies, boys," and without knowing why — the demon was off. Things seemed smooth — the sun was coming up prettily and I leaned over the side to see if I was off yet. Well, I felt like I was standing on the head of the flag pole of the Metropolitan Building. Then I felt alone. And Gee! I was never quite so homesick — never in the depths even of a jungle — as I was just then, a little way off solid ground. I decided mighty quickly that Mother Earth was very loving — exceedingly loving, so I cut her off and nosed into a glide. Somehow she decided — for she's a masterful mistress, a real vampire — she decided to cati-corner — that is, to make the "first hopper" feel like a kitten entangled in a ball of yarn; so that my landing was like a flat tire.

By the time I fully realized that I had flown by myself, without breaking my neck, a few Annamite mechanics came running up to me and set me on my backward route — "taxying" across the field. And there you are! At least I can come walking back with the crowd from solo field. I am one of the austerities of camp. Flying now starts — I mean not exactly flying — but excitement.

Of course aviation is, from the first ride to the last smash-up, one long series of heart-quakes, dinner parties, and sleeping, but after you start out alone in the world, the heart-quakes become soul-quakes.

Machines break up around you, friends escape by a hair's breadth or don't get the hair's breadth in, and you yourself are floating between heaven and earth with a trip much easier and quicker to make upwards to Saint Peter and heaven, than downwards to earth.

My next trip will be a "tour-de-piste" about ten minutes around the main field. Other machines to look out for (landing from a height and length of time not counting the weather up above and your nervousness) make it quite appalling, so I'll go to the theatre and get it off my mind.

By the way, we'll be allowed the privilege of being the first of America's Army to get to the front, for the other boys won't be in the trenches before we overfly them.

Say, by the way, is n't this the typical dream — a mother reading her boy's letter about the trenches and the enemy?

I received the Pequot Casino cigarettes, and outside of making me sick for New London every time I smoked one they arrived just at the critical point in the happiness and sociability of a room of four camp boys, when all four are broke and the last pinch of tobacco has long gone, even to the last scent of its smoke-rings, for when a room no longer smells of sweet tobacco, it loses coziness and spirituality; the boards of the walls, the crude furniture, all its materialism triumphs in its cold reality.

Did I tell you I had just finished Benj. Constant's "Adolphe"? A powerful analysis mediocrely told.

Some of the causes seem often weak, but of course he had a weak and lazy type to treat, who, moreover, had the misfortune to go through his first love affair — period when one has wild ideals of self-sacrifice — under conditions that made his smallest actions and thoughts important and lead to important results — a woman depending on no one, free to be with him continually, for him and more than all over him. Too strong a character seeking too decisive results and important results out of a boy who was only in his first love, where beautiful principles dominate the demands of life and thereby wreck them if they get a chance. They got a chance at Adolphe, for he was free to act as his puppy heart dreamt and wreck him they did.

Of course, too, the weak causes can be defended as true to nature, through the fact that it was the actual experience of the author and Madame de Staël.

Create some big work this winter out of your summer's inspiration.

Love always and abundantly

JACK

Aviation School in France
October 17

MY DEAR GRANNY: —

Now don't you wish you had flattered and fondled me beyond all extremes, now that I can fly instead of walk; don't you wish you could get a hint, an invitation, an actual flight? Think of seeing Uncle Free's palace from above and soaring far beyond its pin-

nacles a-gleam in the sunlight, to glide to the four corners of wide-spanning Watseka! Dominating the world, dominating the human race, dominating Watseka, Onarga, Kankakee, and La Hogue all at once, from one point in space in the time of one second — then would n't you feel like flattering and fondling more than ever your little grandson?

It's great sport, though, and after eating and sleeping, is really divine. I'm running the ol' boat alone now, and Gee! how the clouds do hate me! They stir up more wind and Cain-raising in a second or two than all the Fourth-of-July crackers in Watseka could do at three in the morning. It even beats the arguments around the corners of Main Street and often has the advantage of very decisive results — absolute smash-ups.

That, of course, adds a current of excitement to the monotony of camp — betting whether or not a chap is going to "slip off" on his glide or "pancake" on his landing, and often winning a few greenbacks if he does.

You see you're on the field for the excitement of the gang, and if you don't come down 'midst a cloudburst of splinters and wires or at least turn a few somersaults, you're not worth the training of an aviator.

It's not all just so romantic; though to-night, to see us sitting around a double-jointed stove, smoking pipes, blinking in the heat, and arguing out of the corner of your mouth freed by your pipe, to see us talking of bed-time instead of movie stars and anticipating a decent breakfast instead of a palace in Venice, you would turn

our aviation camp into a little town gathering in the hardware store or the grocer's.

Now and then, forgetting the price of beans or lawn mowers, we mention that Tom had a forced landing at dark, or that Bill, instead of milking the cow, slipped off the wing and just turned over in time.

Now and then we put wings on the speckled cow, but outside of that we appear, are, and feel like a bunch of farmers. Of course (as you can guess) just during the broke period.

Pay-day always leaves the farmyard gathering miles beyond and looms up the dear and more becoming palaces of the Venice of our Youth.

A city is at our disposal and aeroplanes to spur us on, so we usually make things hum. We turn the town's old propeller around and if the motor does n't spin, we break it into a dozen sky rockets.

Does that seem comprehensible to you in America? I hope so, because over here aviators are supposed to be insane, and I'm almost afraid we are. We have fits of silliness, daring, and raving absolutely worthy of Kankakee's insane asylum, far exceeding the limits of the stage or even of auto-racing, worthy only of its true native home into which it fits perfectly, this flying life — the insane house. In fact, you can see that from the beautiful mixture I have here composed you of farmyards and castles in Spain, with a few big words and accidents on the side. Nevertheless, I can always be sure I love you no matter how "nutty" I become.

JACK

October 17

MY DEAR MOTHER: —

In the American Field Service, the percentage of death (therefore of bravery and risk) was one-fifth, while in aviation, according to the statistics of the last offensive that permitted flying weather, the percentage was eighty per cent. In other words, out of ten boys that left camp, two came back. So I was amused at your recommending me to be brave. If you'd have heard, as my comrades did, when I started off on my first "tour-de-piste" alone, our monitor exclaim: "There goes a dead machine!" you would have turned your recommendation to bravery into one to God and my soul.

However, I got out of the cheval-de-bois all right — straightened out; and feeling somewhat the color of the trees below me, shot on through the air, my eyes watering as if they were peeling onions.

I don't think I ever hesitated more as to whether I wished to continue to be an aviator, than I did just then. Somehow my legs were pushing the rudder unconsciously like the wagging of a dog's tail, my hand just could n't steady the manche à balai, and the old boat was exhibiting gleefully to me, such twists and twirls and unknown sensations as I never imagined an aeroplane, with all the space to help it, could ever find the caprice to invent. As for other aeros, I did n't give a snap — they just had to look out for themselves. I was far too busy trying to carry a ton of tacks on an ice-covered path one foot wide, between two gigantic abysses.

Every peculiar lurch, start, or cati-cornered thrust instantly became for me a wing slip (certain death) or a tail slip (fair death) or a loss of speed (absolute death), with a few extra possibilities such as leaping off the Woolworth, turning somersaults on the last twig of a tree and lighting on the lightning rod — Pavlova style.

As I was most 'round the "piste" my engine started missing and I to look for a landing ground in case of a forced landing. Well, I did n't look long. Mother Earth's smile, from up above, turns into the most ghastly grin of Satanism. I just kept my eyes ahead and waited. She picked up and before I realized it, it was time to cut off; then to re-dress, to pull back gently for a beautiful skimming landing, and to suddenly feel a bump — brrrr — as the boat hits the wharf instead of just fitting in. However, I was lucky, for out of thirteen who went up, seven machines were broken that morning and mine was still intact.

But I won't feel at home up there for at least five or six more trips. That front seat sure looks empty. It just makes a big vacuum inside you, and between you and the ground — a great vacant lot of nothing — great falling matter.

You see, as I told you, once in solo, a man has a lot to tell — the heart-quake moments turn into hours as "Poor Butterfly" goes, and the dreams into nightmares.

I don't know where I'll be this winter; as long as I'm on the earth it will be all right.

I'll write to Mr. W. as soon as I get a little brain

matter and ambition back. I've been loafing and sleeping terribly, lately. My health could not improve.

Give me news of Dick and tell him to get over here before I fly back and kidnap him.

Very much love always

JACK

Aviation School
October 24, 1917

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER: —

I am very tired — disgusted and stupid. Tired because it's just after flying period and I've been in barracks, broke, for a month; disgusted — I mean mad, very mad, because I have n't been up to fly for three days, stupid because I 've been doing nothing. Nevertheless, I shall write you, because I feel instinctively that it has been some while since my last letter to you. During that time much has happened. I have been flying alone considerably and feel confident — too confident in the air. An aviator must be *calm and thoughtful* — my thoughts are voyaging and dreaming too much. I don't concentrate enough up there. I'll not think aviation so soaring next time and will concentrate more.

Perhaps — for the sake of conversation at this hour about which you will probably be taking tea in the red-draped studio upstairs, talking nonchalantly or nonchalantly dreaming — I shall answer you with what I have been doing to-day.

At sunrise, before even, I yawned and (we are four

in a room by ourselves now, Jack, Bruce, Bill, I) asked Bruce how the stove and the weather were. As both agreed to my getting up, I slipped on my "leathers" just in time to race for breakfast: coffee, bread, syrup, beans. Then I came back for a cigarette while the first two platoons marched down to "double controls" and "landing." Poor devils, they had to take life so hard compared to the "solists," and at last I was one of the privileged ones.

Once out in the field I found the wind blowing hard, but was on edge to get up. I did n't, though, and perhaps it was best; so after standing in rubber boots and a wintry climate for three hours, I came back and finished up my toilet down to my finger-nails. I played soccer-ball a while, smoked a little, and went — I mean ran, raced, flew to lunch: potatoes, bad meat, tough bread and cheese. I rested after lunch and smoked some more of my friends' cigarettes — tried to read "La Femme de Trente Ans" of Balzac, but threw it up. Then came lecture.

Everybody smokes and cracks jokes, for the lecturer — a comrade — is a peach and his stenographer still better. I intended to take a walk, but did n't; met some boys from Paris, who had their commissions from ground school in U.S. and were just starting in to fly. They thought too much of their Harvard accent — a dead-sure result of getting stripes — so I just turned away towards my room. I again tried to read Balzac's "Thirty-Year-Old Woman," but found her too complex, and upon a call-out grabbed my flying clothes and

got over to the machine. I also found out I was to be paid to-morrow, so I had a broad smile on my face. It died down during the afternoon, though, for I did n't fly, which set me raging — numb with the blues!

Well, one fellow was tried out in front of the chief pilot to see whether he should continue. He got by for some reason or other. We call him "horse-shoe" anyway.

Baron de Haven, our monitor, got mad because we cut in on the Anzanis and explained how yesterday at C——, on account of cutting into another "piste" that way, four men were killed. Then one of our machines bounced on its wheels and flipped over on a wing — breaking it. A couple of pilots went up in Nieuports and played tag and gave war manœuvring — that is, as soon as one would get in a position to kill the other — the latter would "barrel" or "tail-spin" or "wing-slip" and loop away. Another one of ours came in with its hood hanging on the motor. It was getting late, and I was about ready to fly as far as my frozen senses could make out. The wind was strong. Another fellow came in — glided — "piquéed" too much, bounced up some ten yards and dug straight down. The fool pushed on his stick because he got rattled, burying its nose in the earth, turning over, breaking everything to be broken, including, almost, my friend Jack, who was just climbing into another machine.

The author escaped, and we took him out of his belt just in time for him to meet the usual storming of the monitor. As usual, also, the boy took a broken propeller

blade back to hang over his door or make a cane with.

Jack made a good landing after correcting the drift in his glide. You see, one is supposed always to face the wind starting and landing. The boy, just before we started out, made a "cheval-de-bois," turning around to the left on account of the pull of the propeller (propeller-torque), cut off and started again; he repeated a little, got off the ground, thought he was still doing it, cut and came down on his wheels; thereby "dropping the carlingue," that is, lowering the front-middle of the machine through a choc, so that being our last machine, the monitor strode off with a bark of a "good-night" at the class of young aviators — would-be aces — future heroes — and future corpses, and the said multitude, including myself, who by that time was foaming at the mouth, strayed wearily, drearily back towards the barracks.

I will soon be eating supper. We have only three meals now — supper is very bad meat, tough bread, beans and jam — that is, if you get there first, and after you get there, can eat it, then I'll smoke "bull," read, and go to bed with hopes and disgusts and glimpses of vengeance for the morrow.

There is my day — poor me — please a little more tea and another slice of chocolate cake, or perhaps a "tortoni" before the tray is carried out and we light the lamps. Mr. W., I suppose, is just coming home and P'tit is starting to prepare. I hear an echo of an old banjo and the hollow blow of a wintry wind. Ah!

yes, I am not there. I am here; the echo is reality and reality is an echo.

I am not on the divan and cushions of the studio. *I am at war.*

Very affectionately

JACK

P.S. We honored Guynemer's death as all other schools in France and camps. He is called the "Child of France" as Joffre is the "Father of France." Immortal honors of all deities are raised in praise to him — eternal praise.

Last day of October, 1917
Aviators' School

DEAREST MOTHER: —

I always put a lot of affection in that title. I always sit down to write you with great concern and a larger heart. No matter what I may write, what frivolities and scrawlings, what business terms or diary notes, it is always with much consideration and warm sympathy that I send the letter to you. It is a root that has taken firm hold and only the most desperate aggravation could loosen it. It is something that can never be forgotten under any skies, on any soil, for it is there; it grows; it is ready to force its presence on me if necessary, for it has gathered the austerity of even commanding me through the long years that have made us not only relations but friends. I hope that you will always be conscious of it under any circumstances — which indeed

would be the trials to go through and the tests that are necessary. I think one always comes back to his mother. It's an animal law and most probably a human one.

I'm in the last class of this school now, and if good weather keeps up, I will be voyaging and doing the other stunts that go to make up the "brevet" and to make you an aviator full-fledged, licensed, and ready for the Devil himself. After that, perhaps two weeks or three from now, I get a three days' leave in Paris, during which I shall enjoy the comfort and refinement; in short, the contrast of a good hotel, good meals, and all the other bourgeois luxuries. It's good to wallow in bourgeoisie a couple of days after a period of more or less privation. After that I don't come back to Tours and its golden, burnished château-land again.

I go to the school of "perfectionnement." It will be all American and the biggest in the world. Where it is I am not at liberty to tell, but there my occupation is that of the French schools of perfectionment, that is, training on light fast chasse machines (if I choose "chasse" work), very modern; in fact, such as they use at the front every day. There I go through acrobatics and machine-gun work and some extra delicacies including lectures on aerial war tactics and strategy.

After that, I know not what — outside of perhaps another permission to Paree — just what Fate will do with me. I have hopes, though, that she will not make me a monitor, but send me to the front, although both are worthy of any aristocrat.

To-day Bill is leaving for his three days in Paris. I

will only see him again at the "école de perfectionnement." He got through without breaking a thing, which is good.

Just back from two ten-minute turns out on the field on the Anzanis (the last class of the school). I ran into a rainstorm for a while and it was annoying. It took half the joy out of the scoot, for it feels like fifty Singer machines all sewing at once, criss-cross your face.

Mother! I've just found out that the one man in the world I would want to meet lives about five kilometres from here in a big château and wants to meet an American soldier. He is ANATOLE FRANCE. Is it really possible? Were I to meet Jesus on Fifth Avenue, I would not be so surprised. Maybe I'm not out for the biggest adventure I've had yet. I'm off — let's hope I succeed; I have a couple of rivals; one who had it all fixed up for himself, but is spending a couple of days in jail. Ah! I'm off! ! !

Outside of that, I've just received the "Touchstone," and as a most natural result fell deadly in love for the fiftieth time with all the Isadorables.

Mrs. B. has just sent me a great package, the best of which is a candy box all dolled up to make a marvelous Louis XV tobacco safe. The pictures of yourself are wonderful. I keep them as poems and beg you to take all you can. You have n't sent me as many as I've sent you. Send me pictures of my friends, too, if possible. But after yours, what I'd rather have would be a monthly package made up of "Seven Arts" (magazine) and "Vanity Fair." I hope you will not forget them, for

it is important that I keep in touch with the world I am to handle later. I've just heard that "Harper's Bazaar" is now still better than "Vanity Fair." Do send me a couple of copies.

Now I'll close and wait for some good weather. That means reading "La Femme de Trente Ans," of Balzac and finishing a couple of Futuristic conceptions of Gretel until at last a warm Indian summer day shall greet me into a future career that shall not have room for any of the late boredom. I shall do my test, great through its tangency to your first adventurous flying. Then to Paris; then perfecting on beautiful modern machines and all the future I've dreamed of at the front and perfected in my mind as a gigantic horizon. So I'm perfectly satisfied with life now, although feeling quite material. So much so, in fact, that I'm more pleased than anything else with the beautiful pen I've found to write you with. It's the best I've had since the funeral of my fountain pen. This pen makes life just one long serpenting enchantment. See how nice it scrawls! ! !

Ta-ta

JACK

I don't see how the Victor records, trunk, and my belongings would cost too much, as there is no duty on baggage coming to soldiers. Please send them to me, as I'd like to enjoy them while I can, outside of the fact that it would be a little bit of music and comfort at the front, which, little as it may seem, is not a neglectable factor, at least to one who is going through it. People

in America don't seem to realize they're at war. When you come back from the Red Cross parade and their carnival banners and write me of how America is waking up, it does n't make me smile; it makes me pity when I think of the parades I've seen at the front — parades of living ghosts.

Aviation School
November 2, 1917

MY DEAR MR. W.: —

My first letters were purposely vague when I entered aviation, and I think that I have explained why to mother about two months ago.

My first reason was that I did not wish mother to start fussing and planning to prevent my decision from realization until it was already under way. My second reason was that censorship forbids me to say much under penalty of court-martial. My third reason was that those items of news entrusted to me as a private and perhaps a future officer of the U.S. Army, I fully intended to keep within their own circles.

Having gone through double-controls, landing-class, and first solo class, I am now in the last class of the school, which will throw me on to my license tests and my career as an aviator.

A number of times I had thrills that made me want to give the whole wonderful game up, but in between times I have never felt so happy in all my life. Those thrills are bound to come. They're the most of the game and make the sport adventure, so I'm getting over their

after-thoughts and trying to be as sane as possible, though the French say that to be in aviation one must necessarily be or soon become insane.

As I have n't the slightest intention of ending up at an asylum, in spite of its low price, even in war, I suppose that the greatest factor of flying, its inspiration, will be mine and geometrically increase that happiness that has already freed me from the hypnotic pettiness and strife that New York seems to loom up on the horizon of a young school-boy.

There have always been two things I never wished even to consider: the army and aviation. I am in both as a result, and still more, I cannot now understand how any man can keep out of them. They have temptations for every character of the "Human Comedy."

I would like to tell you the technical side of my life, and some of the rumors and plans that I hear about, but as you know, it is impossible. The censor only lets Art slip by and is often strict on that too.

In ending, though, it seems that in the last big offensive, that of Champagne, the casualties of aviation were eighty per cent. They always have been the highest, so I might hint that in case anything should happen, I would be entirely at ease that you would exercise all of your very strong influence to appease mother in every way and prevent any sad results from her womanly fanaticism.

I am very respectfully and obediently

JACK

November 4, 1917
Aviation School

My dear Seven Arts: —

At a table covered with an army blanket, warmed by a cast-iron stove, lighted by a barrack window, sits Jack Wright, himself, with a letter from a little French girl in his pants pocket and a letter from a little American girl in his shirt pocket — as to his money pocket, there is nothing of special importance.

I've just finished an Abdulla which, being ninety-nine per cent opium, makes me conscious that being broke can never be beautiful, especially after being rich a week ago. Therefore, the letter in which you gave me a prescription of how to live on six dollars a week was most harmonious to the present mood of his majesty's austere soul; excepting that I'm just now demonstrating how six dollars a week is luxurious. The only thing that annoyed me in your letter was its vitality — that did n't harmonize at all.

Since I've been in this game, I've given up Art entirely; I've become like ye ancient Greeks who used to sun-bathe on the top porch, drink sodas on the veranda, and sun-bathe again on the top porch after inhaling the perfume of sweet flowers on the way between the top porch and the veranda (the way being made as short as possible at that).

My life consists of being broke and not being broke. Both are equally passionate: one consists of flying and the other of flirting.

You see, Youth was not meant for sculpture and architecture; that is for lofty, classical, cold and beautiful Idealism. Youth is a painting, splashed with colors, lights, and warmth of life radiated through some crystal medium, some medium between nature and him.

As to study and its pleasures, contemplation of psychology, and the rest — that's for still further on — Old Age.

Just now I am out for life's passions. Whee! but I'm wild. Still more, I am not making Art out of them, but making them the Art — the living Art; the most real and therefore the most palpitating and the most in resonance with the human soul of all Art. It is a great deal to mingle with human nature and its throbbings; they are not divine, but they are real, and therefore strong.

Dreams are divine, so they are vague, and lack strength and impression because they can only be realized in Art. Of course they gain in permanence. One extreme is materialism; the other extreme is insanity; the thing to do is to join them, but that I reserve for later on . . .

The spiritual part is in me, but the other part, life itself, I know little about, so I must gain in experience and learn to weigh life in its true values and thereby join more harmoniously my Art to Nature.

Yet, I have another theory. Being an Idealist, it seems horrible for me to want to join Art to human nature and produce a medium between the two, for fear that I would have neither, so I think that I shall just take one and live it thoroughly; then the other and live it thoroughly.

First (being young) I shall take human nature; second (when older), I shall take Art. In other words, I'll now become a note of rag-time and later a nut . . .

So you see me, in spite of my cheerless surroundings, a liver of life — an artist of the real — a youth trembling within the infinite arms of life.

Outside of that, I am flying. I've been here two months and am practically through. I have obtained three things: A cadet officership, a French flying brevet, and the discovering of the most voluptuous and beautiful woman in the world — my aeroplane. Were it a choice between Anna and my 'plane — well, I'll admit I would hesitate; but were it a choice between the rest of the school put together with Isadora in the bargain, I'd choose my aeroplane decidedly.

My boy, I know what it is for the young country poet to hit New York, or rather for New York to hit him, but aviation is the ninth marvel of the world, be it the handkerchief wave of a school-girl, as I skim by, or the wave of the black veils and tricolor banners of all France; be it the sunlight on a daisy field where cattle graze or the roaring speed with which your machine hurls you into the mouth of the mighty brazier gold: the setting sun. It is more than a passion, for while you are winging through space, you also realize that those sunlit beds of flowery meadows may be instantly the chasm of your grave. The very danger of it impassions you. Your head rings with the constant humming of the wings of death until, superbly mad, you strain your feverish lips towards Death, the queen, and beg of her

a kiss. I know that some day these lips of mine that smile as Death promenades with me will tremble; some day — some glorious day of Spring, with too much Youth and passion, and that as steel towards magnet they will seek her mouth and find it in a first and last long kiss. And that Death shall be like one in the full divinity of first love; it shall be immortal and eternal.

That, my boy, is more than most men attain. Though your present life be "just as in the novel," mine will one day, for a few hours, be just as the novel could never attain.

> "One glorious hour of crowded life
> Is worth an age without a name."

Scott was right — n'est-ce pas? Then why not come and join me.

Your mention of fruit and indigestion amid your poetic letter greatly amused me. It amused me as seeing Andover once again in the midst of your Oriental life.

I am glad to hear Dick and you got on good. Tell me if you meet any more of my friends, and for God's sake don't break up the Duncan school. Tell me what you think of them all.

I am living now with Bill T., — what I call a hereditary friend, one of those people you've *always known.* Then Jack S., who swims around in the river of my atmosphere with Springfield, Massachusetts, tied around his neck. Then Bruce H., a stoic old classic who writes sonnets and heroic plays, who has been on the newspaper and out West and who makes life a psychological study at which he smiles from his classical heights on to the

chaotic depths of free verse. He probably used to be one of the good old pillars that upheld our friend the Parthenon.

There is also myself — lazier than ever. Laziness, you know, is the worst of human vices, for it leads to boredom and from there catches the express for hell.

Just found out that Anatole France has a château next door and wants to meet an American soldier, so I'm after him.

Write me considerably just now, for your letters are very interesting at this stage. I know they will change soon enough, so each one becomes a gem.

I will try to send you some photos in exchange for news of your latest girl (news from you, of course), and only hope that you get a few settled ideas in view during the very hard school year. I admire your working just now beyond the question of its difficulty, though.

I have given you, here, some entangled yarns of general philosophy — spiced here and there; here and there wound into embroidery. I hope I have n't been too severe with my seeming indifference against your life which I realize is hard — very hard — as hard as I could want.

I hope I have n't talked too much of my lazy army life and its ego. I hope I have tempted you to write me soon, lengthily, often, and all the rest that goes up to make one of these impossible, perfect correspondents.

With my sincere congratulations

JACK

5 *November*, 1917

My very dear Mother: —

Just a word before lunch. It is a windy late autumn day. I used to like the wind, but now that I'm in this game I don't. In one class this morning five men flew; two had forced landings; one finished safely; two smashed up while landing, all on account of the wind. Don't worry, though, for though I've seen accidents lately, I've never seen any one killed. Since I've been here, only a finger has been broken; it was peculiar, too, for the boy was spilled out of his machine by some telegraph wires and fell to the ground; his helmet saved him.

I was saying that I did n't like the wind these days, but the purple and rusty landscape is enchanting. Now a long streak of vineyards with a row of leafless trees veiling in their dusk the white façade of a château. Now a cluster of rays from out of the clouds on to a bunch of golden trees and their barkless, shining trunks, — all is a land of color from the red belt and blue wheelbarrow of the road man to the valleys of rusting gold and their tarnished skies above.

I suppose I told you I'm on my tests now; still more, I'll be one of those to get the French brevet instead of the American, which, in a way, is a distinction if you consider that only the first to volunteer will receive it. The badge will be like this: [sketch.] It is the stamp of a full-fledged aviator and is worn over the right breast pocket. The wings and the star are gold; the wreath is silver.

Then I become a member of all the different aero clubs. No matter where I go, in what country, I'll have a home and an honored one.

The tests consist of four trips covering some four hundred miles. Then the spiral test, consisting of two hairpin turns; and landing within a circle, and an altitude test demanding you to stay at seventy-five hundred feet for an hour and a quarter and a number of landings and hours necessary. On all these tests you must keep a good barograph reading of level flights, descent and ascent.

This morning I went out on the spiral field and learned how to do the hairpin, but did n't get up. This test will be like this: [diagram.]

Then I walked back, instead of taking the truck. The long Touraine road bordered by tall trees was sprayed with autumn leaves. Here and there a cluster of golden ones would sparkle out against the deep green background of a grove of pines — all tossed in the fragrant breeze. Here and there a still pool with a half-sunken barge that had been left untouched by the artistic French so to give more poetry where possible, and to send to the passer-by from its ruins, veiled under playing reeds and bright leaves, the echo of an ancient romance; perhaps when smiling lips met smiling eyes as the barge drifted on smiling ripples.

My friend Jack smashed a machine to-day. He bounced on his landing; did n't have speed; so that the wind crashed him down again on his wing; it was hardly his fault.

Wednesday, the 7th — Morning

Again a word before lunch. Had a funny time this morning and feel quite happy, as one would after a couple of hours with his bestest girl, for I had about one and three-quarters hours with my machine. I did the three things I wanted to do while at this school: fly over the city, chase a train, circle down on a château.

First of all, let me acknowledge the candy — more than acknowledgment, though, for it was just like Christmas to get it. One boy got some cigarettes to go with it and another some Hershey's chocolate bars to add on, so six of us sat down and with candy, cakes, and cigarettes, lived like millionaires, although we were all broke. The main joke of the evening was one of the chap's fourth girl getting married as all the previous ones, so we toasted him with caramels and Fatimas through a long evening of aviator cheer; he was the gayest of all, for you get to be a Fatalist out here; in fact, it is necessary that you do, that when you're up, you realize that if Fate intends you to live you shall, and reciprocally — that gives you great courage, and with the help of the roar of the motor and hurricane blast of the wind as you split the space, all fear becomes quite humble; it must. We ended the happy evening like little children, telling ghost stories with the lights out and our bellies brimful of candy.

This morning I went with the totalizing class because I came out short of hours from the solo and needed a couple more about before voyaging, etc.

My first machine was tried out and ahead she bounced and shot full into the rising sun; she skimmed upwards, and below me; across the shining river, the dark towers of the cathedral stood in their mediæval ignorance — petrification. My soul was soaring too, when I heard the motor talk back at such spiritualism. I wondered if she was missing. Well, you never have to do much wondering here. It simply stopped dead a second. I looked at it, at first patiently; she picked up; stopped again; this time I could n't stand such foolishness and got mad. I swore at the cursed demozel for going back on me and fully explained to her that we had lost fifty metres and only had fifty more left. Whereupon she quit making fun of me and started off halfway decently again, but nevertheless with misses and bangs and stops that made my heart patter. You always do love a person more when they start going back on you. Decidedly I was entirely in love with her now, so much so, that my tour was shortened and spoiled for the need of looking out for good landing spots, clustered houses, woods and vineyards, not forgetting telegraph wires. Of course, though, I got back with my usual good luck. A forced landing is a great experience, but one never cares much for it.

In a few minutes another machine was ready and I was off for a half-hour. I sailed over the cemetery and its black crosses like so many dead ants, all of which I did n't forget to salute at full attention, for one always has much respect for their future home. The wind was getting to be like a hurricane and bumps were frequent;

it kept me working steadily and my legs, even, grew tired, though they were propped against the sides. I passed over the bridge I used to take into town when I had money and saw the rue Nationale where all the cafés and theatres are. Little people were going about their petty ways. I did n't bother to wave to them. Now and then the King condescends to anoint his people with a wave of his royal hand, but only as an exception. I then took a notion to see if my friend, Mr. W., was home, so I passed over the convent and in front of his château, but he was n't even out hunting on his grounds. Flying at fifty metres is, after all, the best, though it is a little dangerous; so I came down and passed slowly (about sixty miles an hour) above the peasants ploughing and sawing, over their heavy stone farmhouses with their display of chickens and kids in the courtyards and a geranium or two on a window sill. My neck was as tired as my arms and legs, so I settled down to earth again.

I went up for another half-hour and explored a different part of the land — long, brown fields, slim gray trees with blue-gray ponds amongst them. Here and there a villa in its luxury of leaves and flowers and autumn sun. I was dreaming away happily. Now and then a machine would pass under me or keep up on my left, for instance, like a kite attached to me being strung out little and little, until I'd back around steeply and change direction, getting face into the wind and scarcely advancing, but climbing as fast as I pleased. Just after leaving the city and the cemetery behind

again and pleasantly bathing in nonchalance, the old boat took a swerve to the right and down on the wing in a speedy drop through space. I had a faint notion it might be the end and my teeth gritted. I managed to bring her back, though, and looked around for my star in the heavens.

Well, I went up again with orders to come back to the hangar when I was through, for everybody had stopped. It was rough and unpleasant. I was tired and feeling a little cloudy like the sky. Your candy was playing me a mean trick, I guess, for I thought an awful lot about the Touraine. I got up to three hundred and fifty metres (four hundred yards — higher than the Eiffel Tower) and looked the country over for a decent château. I followed the Loire out a way and saw a beauty — terraced and surrounded with fountains and gardens. One window was open, so I shut down the motor and glided straight for the open window. At the end of a hundred yards I was about thirty metres from it. Whereupon a fair lady came out on the balcony in a violet robe and sent kisses to the unknown cavalier, the aviator, one of her future defensors. It was a gallant kiss — not a flirtation. Something as the fair nurse (if there be such) bestows upon the dying soldier. I like those gallant kisses and the message it brought to me as a silver arrow shot through the golden sunlight was pure and radiant. This was the impression of a second, for I was just skimming the trees; so I pulled on the gas lever and with a thunder burst the motor picked up the machine and shot her ahead as I slightly banked,

thereby going in every direction at once: ahead, above, and sideways on a wing. I turned for a last farewell as I left the roof under my train and took the trail of the gods towards their vastness of blue. I got up higher than the Eiffel Tower again. Being bored, I shut down the motor and "piqué." Silent and swift with the wind whistling in my ears she dropped in a few seconds the space of three hundred metres. I was just on top of the houses and plains again with my stomach in my throat and my ears a-singing. Then I let her go on again, now and then jerking her upwards, which gives a cute little tickling in you. Off in the distance a train was creeping around a bend; so I swooped down at it and when at fifty metres off ground with the train some one hundred to my left, I banked into a curve parallel to that of the tracks and slid by it waving to the poilus who answered me joyously, for at last I was "one of them." No longer an "embusqué," but a defensor, even of the poilu himself. I felt their admiration and brotherhood sent out to me at last and was still more pleased than by the mid-air kisses of a moment ago.

I was feeling more than bored, so I gently rose to one hundred feet, swung over to the field, averted any possible machines, and first cutting my motor and then the "contact" (in case of landing accident) settled down to earth with a gradual curve and a long skim just over the ground. Turning the motor on again I sat up in my seat, looked ahead, and "taxied" back to the hangar where a couple of mechanics came out to get the ma-

chine and see it safely in place. All this latter, of course, being done before the envious eyes of the last newcomers, who were in the double-controls I had left behind. In short, I feel like a Senior at School.

P.M.

The rest of the afternoon I spent in resting up from the ride of the A.M.

I think that when I get back to the States, one of the features of my society aero club, which I intend to put in style in place of golf clubs around New York, will be a side show called "Flying without Flying." The person will sit down in a comfortable seat with his feet and hands on cakes of ice. In front of his nose I will place a funnel conducting a compressed air current of some two hundred miles an hour. At his left an ancient Ford motor will be going full speed, but missing, so that between the misses a machine gun can be heard, which noises will be conducted without loss, by megaphone. Around his neck a heavy stone will be tied which ought to tire the muscles out pretty quick, and on his head an instrument of steel something like this [sketch], which is slowly tightened around his skull and his eyeballs.

By this means he will soon learn how to fly. If, like myself, he has never cared much to even ride in an auto, on account of the effect of the throbbing motor, and the breeze, I don't think he'll care so much about flying four to five hours a day out at the front with the increased sensation produced by the ticklish feeling that a Boche is behind you or swooping down from above

or waiting behind one of the thousand and one clouds just ahead.

Thursday

This morning I went into "spiral test." I did n't get up, but had to take the machine home. It is a much speedier and more powerful and lighter machine, so I found out that spiral, something like hide and seek for your landing spot, height, distance, curve, glide, angle, etc., was not going to be one of the easiest. My good luck, though, ought to pull me through. It's now about lunch-time. I'll stop a while; no, I'll get this letter off.

À tantôt

JACK

Best regards to all. Our little spiral monitor must come from the Midi, the way he acts out, on his feet, the test, and swears, gesticulates, and jumps around in general.

11 *November*, 1917

MY DEAR MOTHER OF ONARGA: —

Think of the marvel! I've met another creature from the Onarga, Watseka, Kankakee triangle — a young student-pilot across the hall, Bill Lindsay.

Our chief pilot left to-day for another school. The boys gave him a gold wrist watch. He was a prince and understood the psychological instruction of a student marvelously. I shall never forget the way in which he sent me off for my "first hop" alone. A very young

Frenchman succeeds him as Captain, which is quite a grade in the French Army.

Well, yesterday afternoon I was supposed to have killed myself three times. Not feeling ready for Purgatory yet, I just fooled them all. The first time I was supposed to run into two long, thin poplar trees, but what did I care for such a silly smash-up? Then, when I banked around at fifty metres off, I was supposed to have either slipped on the wing or been flipped by the wind. I sure gave them the laugh, though. Ha! Ha! Bringing back a machine from spiral field, I was gliding, and at the same time watching a machine coming down just over me. I happened to look around just in the pleasant time to find the earth in front of my nose and the grass blades as big as California pines. Well, I did n't care in the least for Mother Earth — not in the least; so I snobbishly pulled back in the stick just in time to swerve up over her tender cheek with a sarcastic grin from ear to ear. I guess I fooled them all right.

This morning I passed the hardest part of the tests — the spiral. I had never been up to six hundred and fifty metres before (twice as high as the Eiffel Tower, so that I enjoyed ravishingly the new and enlarged wealth such height puts into your view — your grasp on earth. The Loire was bending silently round her ancient tapestries of sienna forests and the streaks and planes of light the sun turned the fields into. The city and her towers were lost in the gathering purple of a storm. As I turned back the earth was completely drowned in the nearing storm, but I could see above it

into the secret, sunny glow of heaven as the sun tipped these leaden domes with gold, while across the struts of my plane, as on the window of some saintly church, the sun slanted its warm rays, and I realized that, far below me, men could never touch nor know these spots of sunglow that went sailing with me, hung in the midst of the space of God.

It was very cold, though, for a north wind was blowing, making me drift considerably. As I leaned over the front of the plane to peer down on the mapped-out country below me, trying to place the field amongst the familiar land-marks, I felt as though it were at the front: those roads were trenches and that it was for a battery I was searching. Then I saw the "T" far below me and made for a good position. After cutting off the contact, the long glide down started with only the blowing wind for company. I made my first turn as a train passed far below me. Then came the last — the hairpin — a strong wind was fighting me and being without the motor, it shoved me far back away from the field. I was forced to put on my motor, which luckily caught. My barograph, considering the day, read fairly well. He had me make a second one — this time I was entirely at home and corrected myself considerably, although after keeping my eye on what seemed to be the field, once over it, I discovered not a machine in sight; not a "T"; not a person. It made me laugh, though the monitor was probably dancing the Saint Vitus' dance down below, and all the boys were laughing. Thanks to an old tower and a lake, I found the field, but right under me, which

caused considerable manœuvring. All went as right as it could on account of the wind. I cut and came down when I saw myself short and just about on top of some apple trees. Thank God, that motor did n't miss and carried me safely over their tops. On my first "tour-de-piste," by the way, the whole car of the machine began to shake like an old scare-crow. I did n't know whether a cylinder was dropping off or half the machine itself, especially as there was a grove of trees right underneath, which I supposed might be soft for landing on one out of a hundred times, but which I'd just as soon shun too. The old tug pulled out of it, though, by some mistake or other, so I was able to get down and stamp my feet around to warm up, although I had forty good minutes flying this morning and regret that only the wind will make the old sport impossible this afternoon.

Have just finished Balzac's "Femme de Trente Ans" and started his "Femme Abandonnée." Balzac chats delightfully with his reader, putting in philosophical bits and psychological studies that give a saintly glow to the whole chapter. You know creatures much better when you've read him a little. The hard part is to remember his talkings.

We had some tasteless white bread to-day. The first I've had for half a year, but poor as it was, it tasted like cake to me; so that I stored some extra pieces in my cupboard for rainy afternoons.

Monday night, 12 November

Gee! November sounds wintry, but it has n't snowed here yet, even though we're a month ahead of you here in France.

Well, we had three hours flying to-day. Only hope that weather and machines will let me keep it up, so that I'll be out of here soon.

This morning I did my altitude. I never want to do it again — at least with these open machines. My bird was brand-new, and soon all I could see of the city were sparkling bits that were roofs, and through the layers of mist and the clouds of smoke, the toothpick factory chimneys belched out still more obscurity till the sun seemed but a faint scintillation on the huddling of the industrious city. The test took me two hours, and from the beginning to the end I kept beating my fingers on my knees, as their tips were very numb. Otherwise I was warmly done up in a fur "Teddy-bear" suit and could distract myself on the way up by looking across the tops of the herds of clouds, whose infinite foam under the sun and the unspotted blue above, seemed a gigantic waving sea of melted opals where now and then arose a coral island or a topaz one as the sun tinted a distant cloud rising above the rest. I don't remember all that happened, as when you're up there, during what time you have to try to think and observe and contemplate, the wind is blasting in your face with the force of a big blinding hand, while your motor makes a horrible noise, most indifferent to your poetical attempts. Two things

came to me, though: One, I no longer was the least bit interested in humans; they were almost of another world of which I could only note the outlines — the roofs of those towns below hid, undoubtedly, romances, intrigues, passions, the beatings of many hearts and the palpitations of some souls, but I was far from them. They were vague and half forgotten, and I did n't care for them nor heed them in any way. If I'd had a girl up there with me I most probably would have kissed her a couple of times — but only through habit — not through the least bit of flirtatious interest. I seemed to find my joy more in investigating the new mediums of space in which voyaged unknown mystic and monstrous creations of ages past and future; clouds that were the voyaging souls ethereal of dead worlds; winds and light that were the germs of a vast futurity. Second, as I looked across at those inanimate clouds, vapor and mists floating half between the sun and the earth, as I saw the infinite blank sky, the cold sun, the numb earth, I realized how life was but a scientific combination, but of temporal existence — how it all went to — whence it came — to make up the rest of inanimate space, and to lifelessly float on and up and down as a factor — dead or alive — of science, not of any God or anything, with a soul, only of science, chemistry, physics, materialism, germation and withering. I fully realized that no future life was possible — that it would be ridiculous for us to have affairs before the judgment of a god after death (a god who had no place to exist in this cold, scientific space). I fully realized that once dead and withered, a

plant of the planet Earth, we dried up and away as the rest of Earth's plants and flowers.

I was then at the height I needed to reach — nine thousand feet. There I was to remain an hour on a level — which I did — sometimes letting go of the controls completely and singing up there alone; sometimes half sleeping; sometimes quite bored with the petty yet monotonous aspect of Earth below; sometimes tickled with the novel aspect of color or formation up above the clouds — mostly occupied in watching the time pass away on my barograph. When I saw that I only had fifteen minutes left, I think I never became so suddenly and extremely happy in my life. I let out a whoop, let go of everything, and though fastened in my seat, was kicking around and beating the old plane in a wild attempt to dance a jig. I poured out French rag-time and seized the top plane and shook it like an old friend and raved like a typical maniac for about ten minutes. Then I headed for the city and started the descent. Your ear drums are shoved in; your glands are blown up like balloons, and you think your head, heart, and eyes are to follow; but you soon get down from a place ten times as high as the Eiffel Tower. I went through a little cloud on my way down, although I did n't need to, as I saw the top of it right in front of my upper plane. It smelled like a put-out fire and was quite disgusting and wet. I landed feeling like quite some boy, tipped the mechanic and made for lunch in a hurry not much the worse except for a finger-tip that I probably froze. You always feel great right after a flight because your nerves

are all on edge, but half an hour later you find yourself quite worthy of a bed and perhaps something to stop your head- or neck-ache.

Well, here it is Thursday, the 15th.

The afternoon of my altitude, I went on a "petit voyage." It felt good to get out of "tour-de-piste" and swallow up miles of country. My machine was comfortable and quiet after the powerful altitude busses; so that I felt rather as though taking a pleasant sail than an air ride. I've gotten so that I don't have to concentrate much on the machine, having the "feel" to correct it unconsciously, and can look around at the country nonchalantly, as a fair queen gazing from her throne across her subjects attired in their court costumes. It is remarkable how you catch on to travelling without names of towns or any one to explain, just by your map, which shows you the shapes of certain forests, the direction of certain rivers and roads and their relation to each other. I landed at the town and met a couple of the boys. It seemed like meeting friends in a foreign land and the little gathering of our planes, ready to carry us away again, seemed like a beach party, only that we flew there instead of riding.

On your voyages you usually meet some of the boys and each one has a different tale, equally exciting. Some have been staying there a week on account of weather; some have just gotten away from a château where Count X has been royally entertaining them during a forced landing; some have nearly met death.

The next day I started on a triangle. The first part

was two and a half hours straight flying in icy weather. The wind also takes your head and pulls it back terrifically, adding another hardship to the whole. At first, it was pleasing to feel myself out for a long trip by air; it was a wonderful novelty. A number of machines passed me on my way, and I flew over an English school. I soon found out, though, what these "brevet" tests are; not a test of your flying capabilities, but rather a physical trial, a bit of tangency with the raw side of aviation, an accustoming to what you will have to meet at the front. I landed at X, with the expectation of a comforting meal, with a feeling of having slept out in a snowstorm, and with one of having wrestled a pretty tough bout. My barograph was so far all right. I signed my papers and tried to warm up and rest, but I could n't get anything to eat there, so I climbed in again and set off on the second part. The wind was with me, so I went fast, but I could n't see ahead very far, and it was getging bumpy; now and then you could feel yourself turn white, but I had full confidence in the old bus and just looked ahead and let her go. (By the way, at the end of the first part I had landed with my distributor half off and a spark plug wire cut.)

Before I knew it I was over a city we spent a summer near and then at the end of the second leg of my triangle. There a marvelous lunch awaited me at a certain little house that has become very famous amongst we brevet men for the beautiful little specimen of American Beauty to be found in a neat apron serving a cozy family table in an unknown little country house in an unknown

little country town. Three other boys were there. Weather made me stay there two days; two days of family life — Biltmore food, gigantic beds of silkiness and downiness, and a quaint village proud of a few historic memories and the inhabitants of a couple of people of the day. Outside of all that, we four aviators set the town's eyes wide open watching us joke amongst their funny world of odd people, awkward and ignorant — comical to all but themselves. We would start out in the morning walking through the town, stopping at every little café and spreading our weird oats through their rustic life. We once ran into the town "marché." Immediately the "marché," though in full thrivance, stopped and looked at us. The whole town slowly followed us around their "marché" from counter to counter, as one boy insisted on buying specimens of their wood and iron shoes and another in buying their tablecloth, napkins, and all of us following as gods from heaven or fools from Mars through their aweing, blinking crowds of sheepish peasant boys flirting with peasant girls and hardy peasant women wrapped in black, strapped in at the waist and chained at the feet with their sabots.

Another time we went through hysterics watching one of us get a shave at the barber's. The walls were pasted with all the big men of the world: One whose beard was five yards long; another who had twenty-nine medals; another who was over one hundred years old, and other marvels.

The barber was a fat, rheumatic, goutchalic, peasant woman who first looked at her victims and then, chain-

ing them in the chair, proceeded to flash her saw-edged razor around gracefully, chipping off bits of beard here and there. When she had finished, you walked into a closet and washed the remains of the fight off with some ice-cold well-water, and when you stepped out, she took you by surprise with a gallon bottle of five-cent perfumery which was all showered on you before you knew what was happening. This, of course, required a bath-towel and a lot of sputtering before you came to yourself again. During this time she'd be staring at you over her spectacles, planning another novelty torture of her art.

A few old priests from the school came in. One had taught under Nap. III; one had received a letter from Louis-Philippe and the other had fought under Nap. I, but they were all as spry as kids, as they claimed, pulling their old gray bangs with a laugh and a jig and setting about for the long curriculum of the weekly shave and hair-cut. She came up and challenged each one of us, but having prayed anxiously during the shave of the first one, we backed out, one after the other, in spite of the looks of our chins, and the fatal mistake we would make in refusing Mrs. Bluebeard.

Well, this noon after lunch, I was bound I was going to get back, though the others did n't think it worth while trying. I went down to the field, donned my flying costume, deigned to spare a smile and word on some people, eagerly watching on — also signing my name on some cards for some little demozels; then, after looking the machine over, climbed in, tried out the motor,

waved to the gathering, and was off. First I sailed over the house where I had stayed to say good-bye, then headed for the end of my triangle. I soon found that the clouds were impossibly low and that a mist made it impossible for me even to fly at the minimum voyage height. I was obliged to keep below two hundred and fifty metres and only hoped that my motor would n't fail me in a bad place.

Soon I could n't see far enough ahead to use the map, and the compass, which is rarely used outside of night work on account of its inaccurateness, became my only guide. The bumps were sudden and hard. Finally the fog gathered, and I was speeding ahead in a whirl of opaque mist and now and then a vague glimpse of brown that was the earth. I discovered myself to be over a big forest because I was but a hundred metres over its tree-tops. Thank my luck that the old engine was going good, for a forest from the air in a fog is an ugly mess of sea-weed and black things that you don't care to smash on. It was surely the Forest of A., so I headed off on another angle to leave it to my left and get to the river. All the landmarks looked out for were lost in the sea of mist, and I was starting to think of how it felt to get lost when I was six years old, when a gray, snaky line announced the river, and then the top of a cathedral tower passed under me, telling me I was almost at home and safe. Before I knew it, it was time to land. Luckily the camp was in a clearing and I got back to my little room glad to see home again, to find my little articles of intimacy and a long letter from you.

Thank you for increasing the allowance; I assure you I needed it and will be as careful of it as I am grateful for it. I wish you'd send me a copy of my published letter, if you have one on hand. Of course I am pleased to have something published, especially as they are only offhand notes, carelessly thrown together; not even comparing to my diary, but it goes to show how the poorest prattling, if it meets the public demand at the right moment, can beat out the most serious art. It is a tragedy and a terrible pity.

I would send you more serious reflections from the war, but that I don't want to see them lost. It tickles me perhaps more, though, to see my smallest offsprings and most indifferent words picked up and published as would be the slightest details of a big man — just as journalists would glorify how Pershing lit his cigar or what Whitney Warren thought of the war while getting into a taxi. It's all very amusing. Just now, though, I'm an aviator and that life has plenty of novelty, of varying, sudden, and extreme romance to fill the dreamy desires of youth with all its fantastic wonderings and demands and ideals. Aviation in war-time gives a youth just about all he ever envied in the long list of books from the "Round Table" to "Don Juan."

Well, here's for good weather to-morrow. Ah! Don't add anything to my address other than Cadet-Officer, Jack Morris Wright, Air Service, American Expeditionary Forces, *via* New York; for at any moment I may be changing camps and mail would be lost that had further specifications on its address. The general address covers

all my possible destinations. A detail address could wait for me long after I had left the place for good.

Now enjoy your trip and get New York well out of your system, as you should every once in a while; I'm glad to see you not only start to realize that, but to materialize the conception.

Best love for the best Muzzie

JACK

Two more days good weather and I'll be through!

Aviation School
November 20, 1917

MY DARLING MUZZIE: —

Well, your son is now a full-fledged aviator, diplomed with the Brevet of the French Government and a member of the Aero Club of France, thereby a member of every aero club.

I don't know how far along I was in my tests when I last wrote you, but I think since then I've done a triangle first; I did it in three hours which laid me up with fever and headache for three days. Then to-day, I did a voyage up to X, where there is an English Naval Aviation School.

It is a model camp and painted up to be decorative against the little groves that background it. Everything is clean and pretty and the whole looks like one of those little toy towns you see in windows.

They have a number of planes, well kept, — students in their English naval uniforms — very cocky — and all the mechanics outfitted in the same uniforms,

In the Service

all of which is very different from the French camp, which is somewhat humorous by its mixture of attires and bonnets, and — peculiar for the French — barren grounds and barnlike barracks and hangars. The French only care that their machines run, which they usually do.

Back from X, where I got some English cigarettes, some English food at their officers' canteen, and a general taste of those wonderful English gentleman manners which seem bred into the lowest classes as well as in those aristocratic thin boys who were student-aviators.

I took a little nap and some food and was off to make up some time and landings of which I was short. This done, I walked into the "pilotage" very proudly and expected the clouds to part, the sun to rise, and the stars to dance.

Instead, the Secretary exclaimed, "Another one!" And thus I was knighted with my pilot license.

After signing some papers, I came back to get my suit pressed for Paris, which was the first actual joy and realization that I was at last an aviator.

How the first days of double-control work back in September seemed far away! Yet from the time I decided to join, in July, to now, it has been about a third of a year; never has a third of a year rushed past my bewildered eyes so rapidly. It passed like a comet, furious and glowing. It has been a wonderful period of youth, of adventure, of romance, that which is now the ideal I strive to attain. Thank God, I am living up to

my dreams. Thank God, my dreams are not fancies, are not dreamt in vain, and perhaps the forgings of a real mind and the real prospect of a man.

Love

JACK

I've gone through the school without breaking a thing — rather clever, eh what?

Aviation Camp
1917, *November, Thanksgiving*

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER: —

Our Father who art in heaven, I thank you for this sweet day on which I may give thanks that, as a result of Special Inspection, we are privileged to clean out the barracks from the cobwebs in the attic to the pinheads on the floor, to scrub the soles of our rubber boots and burn up all literature collected in railway stations, to dress up by putting on leggins and to be turned out of the barracks until inspection is over (some three hours) with the feeling of a starched evening shirt and with nothing but a vast field of mud to play in.

However, along with the turkeys the Red Cross has also descended from heaven and permits us to write you 'midst the slaughter of a breakfast table and a subway crowd of cadets.

I close my eyes and listen; the hum of voices and the clinking of cups brings me back to my leave in Paris, only, though, to turn me around in front of its gates as I open my eyes again; yes, I had three and a half days in Paris — rather, in Paradise.

Out of the cot, the mess hall, the walks, the vaudevilles of Tours, and the anxiety of flying, I stepped into the most perfect relax that the luxury of silky beds, Maxim's dinners, taxis, and National Theatres ever bestowed on youth even in fairy tales or Parrish's dream pictures.

Just now, a corn-beef sandwich and some spilled coffee are helping my desperate exuberance of description along; so don't be surprised if I tell you that I never spent three such days in my life.

For seventy-two hours I grinned steadily: I grinned while eating, while sleeping, while constantly wallowing in the constant caresses of luxury, and when I did n't grin, I just shrieked with joy. I forgot that Aviation existed — its brevet pin that I wore was rather a symbol which I glittered through the throngs of Babylon from l'Opéra to Place Vendôme — a symbol of heroism to make men's eyes open and women's eyes half close.

Though I never passed the circumference of the Madeleine-Opéra-Folies-Vendôme, I certainly toured the world, and that within three days. I took in everything from the restful Lotus Islands to Inferno of Broadway. I walked on taxi wheels, sat on pillows, fed on caviar, and for a breeze inhaled but the choicest cigarettes. I most impudently turned myself into a king and commanded world-wide recognition, that is, the head waiter at the Café de Paris always bowed (not nodded) to me, the head waiter at Maxim's always rushed to me to offer his best table, and the head waiter at the Café de la Paix always placed my favorite flowers on my table.

In the meanwhile, the bell-boy of the American Bar, rendezvous of all the aristocrats incognito, was always awaiting my sortie matinal at my hotel door to note my latest prescriptions, and next to him various press agents — dreadful bores — stood with their choice stenographer to rush the headline news of those prescriptions through in the evening Society papers.

In short, my arrival was a triumph (there's nothing left of the Arc de l'Étoile), my stay was an epoch, and my departure was a funeral — in fact, I can still hear the bewailings, especially when the sergeant-major informs me, through a megaphone and an army dictionary that my bunk is an insult.

Having drained Paris, or rather, Paris having drained me, I came down here at X, somewhere in France, mainly in the mud.

Just one incident happened in between, though. I took off the ermine and donned one of these beautifully simple private's uniforms; kings always like to be simple now and then, you know. After an auto ride through the country of France — i.e., a truck ride in the rain — I descended at my winter resort. The first sight of my quarters convinced me that great inventions were under way; they were surely preparing us for undersea flying, for I walked into what at first seemed to be a submarine; as I became used to the dark, however, I found conditions different, i.e., more like that curiosity called the steerage. I don't think that even a woman would have wanted to become curious then, though.

Being slim and pale they shoved me into an upper

bunk so that the climbing up and down the wall to get in would help me along; at the same time I would accustom myself to altitude work and thus be able to — nay, dream not of that, but of helping build the new reservoir that marks the spot from afar — all resorts have the famous flag pole.

The boat was making me a little sea-sick as I had too much Paris, but a phonograph came to my rescue with rag-time. Their worn-out records and their cheap tones have done more these first few days in saving my life than Schubert's "Ave Maria" ever did in saving my soul. I'll never again mock the poet's love for inanimate objects, for this "phono" has become my muse, my religion, my life, my Paris, my corn-cob pipe.

> "Oh, wondrous, ethereal phonograph,
> To thine nightingale voice
> Let me write thee a poet's paragraph."

By that time I was just beginning to realize the substantiality of my brevet and the fact that at last I was a full-fledged aviator. The next morning, while trying to dress at 5.30, I stopped realizing a moment, — being frozen through, — but soon after, picking up stones on a field and piling them daintily in little heaps, I more than realized the heights of aviation. Only one thing lacked to make me feel at home — the black and white suit; but a little later, I, my soul, and my realization of being an aviator, was politely allowed to expand itself further as I carried — more than ever at home — machine guns down a railroad track, slipping on the muddy ties just as back on Fifth Avenue or the Champs

Élysées — just as when, a red bandanna slung on a branch over my shoulders, I used to tread the Santa Fé.

Since then I have been passing the time away passing inspections, unbuttoning my coat to sit down again, and doing it up for another inspection. In between the button-holes I have been laughing away the blues.

That also is quite an art, especially in such a contrast as I am now, when your dreams glide down the fluttering boulevards of Paris and quiver on their butterfly wings whilst your feet slip under you in the mud and at the same time you're saluting in all directions.

Ah, yes! I'm in the Army. I'm even in the Aviation. I'm in the barracks — in the mud — in the barren, empty, stupid, and unsympathetic. I'm being a number (186) in a place Dante never imagined, and yet — a secret — a little word from within me — just a note, but yet the key to a mighty symphony — this all, that makes this letter whine in spite of me — this all — it is the what that makes a man. It makes you set your teeth and square your jaw and if you've got the grit to welcome the worst they can invent with open arms, and still wish for more, if you're a real pilot and can control a smile as well as a plane, you'll not only come through to the caresses fully appreciated, — of a Paradise unbuyable, undreamt, — but more still, you'll come through for the world, and you *a man.*

There's why I smile, mother dear, why I laugh, why I shriek with joy and find the mess hall lined with chocolates, the labor done in Rolls-Royces, the camp a Metropolitan Opera House.

I did n't mean to say all this, but que voulez-vous et que veux-tu — I'm in the Red Cross and all these ancient nurses talking over their sandwich counter lead me into their babbling too.

Now and then, you know, one can't help forgetting that one's writing back to New York where hearts are hidden, words mean their opposite, love is diplomacy and diplomacy is love!

But if you take this off in a den-room, far from the traffic and the tea-rooms, you'll find it a good old-fashioned confession. It'll almost make the New England cottage, the fireside and its little family seem true again and half worth the while as all that should this day of Thanksgiving.

Let all, even New York, give thanks! I'll take my turn first and in doing so, thank you, mother dear, for all that just a simple word like that can express.

Good-bye.

Love. Thank you.

JACK

Aviation School, France
December 10, 1917

MY MUCH BELOVED MOTHER, towards whom I realize more and more the increasing affection I owe and feel: —

I have your letter in hand — the letter you wanted me to burn. First, I won't burn it until you tell me again; because it is very vital — if only the sarcasm with which you begin by announcing a moment of lazy

conversation and end with a couple of points such as come but once or twice in a career.

I have also received a couple of others, but will answer this one first.

I read it in the machine-gun shop while awaiting the lecture and found in it a number of revelations including that general tone of motherly praise which strengthens me, of course, but, oh my, how it does make me vain! It is even dangerously caressing to my vanity, for it makes me think my very laziness some wonderful poetic mood — my very sleep divine — the way I brush my teeth a vast symphony of gurgling such as Beethoven's "Pastorale."

Of course you are one who has suffered more than a great deal — you have suffered more than most "men" (beings made to suffer), and yet you are a woman — frail, sensitive. How you endured it all is by itself a marvel. That alone would be enough to form a career — a career of martyrdom worthy of the highest praise. But seeing in you something exceptional I push my letter further.

One who has been through what you have has necessarily been crushed from their former positiveness to a negativeness of execution and advance — of life in general. Your marriage helped the negativeness in you to grow. You became more dependent than independent — certainly a right position. You have had things given you; necessity has disappeared; hardship and its spurs have passed out and with them a certain amount of positiveness.

The combination of this married life and the aforesaid suffering leave you now in a life half of which is dependent on, and demanded by, your husband, half of which is invaded by the "repos" resulting from your former struggles.

Nevertheless, with my blind "élan de jeunesse" I want you to rise and ever rise. I do not want you to rise through me either; it is too negative — too unreal — too much like the croyant of the mediæval ages.

I am not you, though I come from you. You are you yourself, for your soul, as Verlaine says, is the combination of your head and your heart, neither of which I embody, though I may rassemble. I want you to rise more, then. I think you above the daily mother or the daily wife. I think you an individual, a unit, a pole of art — something quite above Society's males and females — a being with a gift given to it and therefore with an accomplishment to be made. A life-work to be done for the sake of the gift that was given you. More still, for your own sake.

All of this leads me to the following: Just as Mr. W. has his business, so you have yours. Hours which can be devoted to nothing but their own cause. You have your studio, your clay, your thoughts — plunge into them. Bury yourself in them. If you do not make worthy statues at once — of little importance. Keep living in the work and the studio just the same. Keep thinking, keep imagining, keep nervous and creative and questioning and solving and dreaming and working — modelling. Before you know, those hours will

weave a net of months, strong in their accomplishment of art without your knowing it. Because you will have buried yourself daily in clay you will have unconsciously been building a monument of art; just as germs expanding each day build up the system of a human being and, before they know it, have left in their trade a few masterpieces — a heart, a head; perhaps a soul.

Inasmuch as it is mostly for yourself and your seeking of divinity rather than commercialism, it matters little whether you sell or not. It matters little, even, whether humans ever see your work. They are but outside elements in the seeking of divinity you will be working for. Only two elements matter — your work, which is your means — your soul, which is the searcher.

Ridding yourself a moment of all the people and trains and theatres around you in a tempting merry-go-round of material ticklings, you will acknowledge that life is first the guessing of one's highest pleasure and then in the accomplishment and the finding of it.

Your highest pleasure is sculpture. Therefore, anything such as sales, popularity, criticism, fame, is aside. Sculpture is foremost, and alone with sculpture must you be buried during the business hours of your day. It is there you shall obtain of life its utmost: your "highest pleasure." It is there you *shall find your tangency with God — your gates and parks of Paradise.* This God, this Paradise, this higher life, is not ethereal either, but as you near it through daily work and accomplishment and dreams, you will find it a real, palpitating,

radiant being in the comprehension and appreciation you shall have acquired and keep acquiring of Men and Nature that are about you; of their respective weight in the balance of realities and of their beauty and pleasingness for you.

This sounds ethereal, yet it is not. Look at the smallest atom about you — a rock: the man who has not buried himself in work and dreams — who has not developed his gift and his means to divinity — does not know, as he passes, that the rock exists. The man who has done, knows that the rock is there for a purpose — a purpose of inspiration (force, ruggedness, color) to his brain and a purpose of impression (a mood) to his heart, altogether a decisive purpose for his soul.

You see, then, that the smallest atom about you must be comprehended and appreciated. That it is therefore a part of the divinity your work will give you. That this divinity exists and is necessary, if you consider it necessary to enjoy life and that highest pleasure it contains for you.

The simplest illustration is the difference between the love of a couple in the balcony of a movie show or around the soda counter and that in the studio of young Beethoven or the gondola of Byron in Venice.

You see, then, that I insist on your devoting many mute hours of burial within the walls of your studio and your dreams — that I insist that you rise within the genius you have been gifted with, have shown a great deal and have been recognized by the foremost critics of sculpture.

I insist that you, like Isadora, rise in your genius, seek ever towards divinity, and by deitizing yourself, arrive to appreciate life through the light of a higher comprehension.

As a postscript I may add that although New York has no special bearing on what you work at in your studio, its environment, rather than being an ugly impression, should add much to you. Don't you know that everything has a beauty of its own — that that's why life is worth so much — that if you can't see the special beauty of each factor, it's your own fault. New York has a vigor, an enthusiasm for perfecting and progress, to be found nowhere equal. It advances, pushes ahead, accomplishes, enlarges. It's alive; it's a muscle in tension; an athlete at work; a piston of progress. Its vitality, its wide-awake life, its science and accomplishment are beautiful, everlasting and divinely beautiful.

Fifth Avenue is the most wonderful highway of the world, for beyond its style and grace it has the strong undercurrent of something vital in movement — of vast business, circulating, advancing, handling half the world, progressing in the name of mankind. You can hear it in the rush of limousines, in the factory crowds or the pleasure crowds, in all the mighty elements that ebb and rise as the surf and the undertow of a great force.

There is its beauty — a beauty of energy and science — a unit of beauty in the world. Can you not connect art with every kind of beauty? If not, I pity art which claims to be the expression of worldly beauty.

Go to it, mother, there's a great deal of beauty, and

that's all that's necessary for you and triumph. I know you will never admit it, that beauty idea, but you'll have to, for beauty is life. Why, I'm in one of the most barren and uncomfortable holes Satan's heel ever left behind, but still I admit beauty, for the Americans have come here to build not only an aviation camp, but the biggest one in the world, and each day I get inspiration and a breath of life just to hear the multitudinous buzzing of sawmills at work, of laborers' feet treading under loads, of hammers building and building.

Tracks are laid and the progress of science, coupled with efficiency, sends trains into the deserted countryside, platforms to unload at and men and machinery to lay their magic to building up a little city where noise and bustle (apparently horrible) become the symbols of a mighty work in progress, in steady, growing progress. Then looking across the whole of the puffing, grinding, rolling, rising camp, looking through the columns of smoke, the shifting of gas clouds from the chimneys of machines and the blots of steam from their whistles — looking through the haze that enhaloes the whole, I see beyond a vital future of result, airplanes splitting the heavens with their fleets and an enemy's host beaten to the ground — an attained goal — a triumph, reached by the daily teaming work of the many machines and men at this camp to-day.

It is all beautiful and it makes even this place beautiful. I must admit, in spite of me, to find a special beauty here, a unit of beauty, a factor of life.

All this is somewhat smeared with the mud of camp

and blurred by the long hours of idleness, of waiting hours for your turn on some barren, rainy field; it is all dimmed by the sad distance between my present mentality — a compound of nervous tension and the remains of a little poetry — this mentality, I say, and that exquisite condition I was in when my thoughts were clear and a little deep, at least, thanks to study and work.

Nevertheless, it conveys a message, I hope, and that will fulfill, at least partially, my ambitions for you. Perhaps, being my mother, you can guess through this entangled vagueness the source that might have been more clearly expressed under different conditions, just as you read my writing, say, where others unrelated to me could not.

Passons — je repond à vos lettres qui me restent dans la main.

I have received a sweater from the Red Cross and some "Sweet Caporals" from the "Sun." As to warm clothes, etc., I can buy all that myself, much easier than to have them sent. I would like to write you all about my health, clothes, food, and other such questions you ask, but the censor would have me punished for so doing as it would indicate the condition of the American troops in France.

We have a Red Cross here where we can buy sandwiches and hot coffee and think the nurses are pretty, and the Y.M.C.A. (where I find a schoolmate working — son of the famous Robt. Elliot Spear) has a big room where movies and other little entertainments, along

with a store that sells necessities to the music of a fairly good Victor, occupy some most of our blank time.

I'm dying to get a room of my own where I can build up stone on stone a little world of thought and art. I don't care if its sentimentalism wrecks me while flying, but I just can't become an idiot. Heavens! I soon won't even have the necessary wit and appreciation of beings and styles to enjoy my leaves to Paris.

I think I'll be able to fix up some kind of a little world of art to occupy my brain — it will be hard having never worked but by assignment or keen desire, and having gone so long unoccupied, it will be also very discouraging at first, but perhaps I'll be able to do it even without the satisfaction of knowing that I'm doing something through outside criticism, which, of course, I won't have on hand, but if I have the art born within me, and with that alone will I ever do anything artistic.

If I have it, then I will be able to start things going all by myself, to myself, for myself, and be happy, though all my efforts be hidden and unknown to the rest — though nothing be substantial as a result.

Perhaps, though, if my work is good, I will find in it alone enough satisfaction to keep a smile in the place of blank, drooping lips.

Until I get a room, though, it will be useless — besides up till then, thank God, my classes in flying will occupy me most of the time and the rest of the time will be passed slowly but surely — standing at inspections.

Now take all the love, the lasting, deep love I possess. You alone have it, I assure you; you alone have ever

had it. All the rest are but fancies to distract me — flutterings of the heart, not heavings of the soul. And there is all the difference between the nervous, petty, surface of the ocean and the swaying, fathomless forces of its depths far underneath.

Ta-ta

JACK

December 18, 1917

DEAR, DEAR NANA: —

Of any gift you could have chose, bought, or demanded, of some magic Allah lantern, nothing could have been more suited and "à propos" than the two warm, cozy bundles you sent me. I have been wearing them continuously and have felt more "at home" in them than in any Paris hotel or friendly mansion. But more than the sweater and the mits did I appreciate the sincere little note you enclosed with them.

I receive many letters over here — long and exuberant, but nothing satisfies one so much, in places of need, as a short line or two that is really sincere and that carries with it a part of the deep source from which it came. I have kept your note carefully amongst the very few pages that I have stored up during my time in France. Be persuaded that the note shall stay with me for a long time, that the affection with which you wrote it shall not fade from my souvenir and appreciation. It will stay with me constantly in symbol of the dear, dear love you have so lastingly had for me.

That was a very good Nana, so let me pat your hand,

and thank you and tell you that your only mistake is not to realize as much as you should just how much I really think of you.

Now that you've promised to always know just how fond I am of you, just how I like to pet and spoil, in return, my grandmother, I'll tell you how business is buzzying over here. Not of the news you've received through my letters to mother.

You know that I'm now in the real thing. The little wizard they use to hunt men with at the front — little devils of efficiency, you know. But of course you don't see exactly what it is. As a true grandmother you're saying now and then, "Oh, I'd like to know just what he *is* doing!" And then you blame the censor, poor man, and afterwards you'd blame the Kaiser and then the whole worldly system of things that so veil the exact and every movement of little Jack — how he washes his teeth or whether he does at all.

Well, I get up in the morning by moonlight. We never wash. After roll-call, I immediately race to get first in the breakfast line and usually find fifty or so ahead of me. Before breakfast is over I must race back — climb up into my bunk and turn into chambermaid. As the last blanket is folded, I jump down from my bunk, through my flying clothes, and out to formation with the moon still shining and the winter's night on full blast. Then I march to the field of my class, where we build a fire in a tent and sleep until smoked out; by that time our teacher and the planes will almost have arrived; that is, we'll only have another half-hour to wait.

The morning passes between stamping our feet in the snow and flying through it up in the air. The flying is wonderful when you don't have too much of it; so I'm enjoying it immensely just now. Everything becomes white — the snowy ground and roofs, the sky, the silver-painted machine. Here and there tints of rosy clouds or veils of violet or amber gently spread their warming glow across the vast white world you fly through. It is much prettier than summer flying. Things are quieter and more serene, whiter and more saintly.

Flying appears, also, when everything is white, more in its natural aspect — that of everything being a sea through which you swim as serpentine as a fish, or a sky through which you sail and dive. No earth and wheeled vehicles seem to exist.

Well, then we march back again and equally again do we race for grub, wash our dishes and out for a class on motors or archeology or how to make chocolates. Then about the time you are telling Tee to stop clawing your dress while you serve tea, I am entering that famous rendezvous for all the camp where, after work hours, we gather (or push rather) to the Red Cross counter to buy tea and sandwiches and spread all the last rumors of the camp, of how the Germans had nearly taken Paris or the opposite; why we were not to wear special aviator uniforms and who was hurt during the day and always — oh, always — how well "the" nurse could speak French.

If I have any extra time, I use it, most valuably in washing. If not, I don't wash; perfectly natural, perfectly simple. After dinner I either go to the Y.M.C.A.

to hear that the band has fallen sick or else I roll into bed as fast as I can arrange the blankets.

So you see your Jacky tumbles from here to here throughout the day, from formation to classes and at last back to bed for a night of beloved rest and dreams of home — happy Christmas visions, and silent thanks for the little comforts, such as the sweater and mitts, that are sent from "back there."

And you — just how are you? How is health and life and happiness? How is all that is due one in your stage of life? What do you do to pass the hours away, or, better still, to greet their coming and wishing for more?

Tell me something of the aspect things and people present to you and what substantialities and hopes you hold in life. They are all vitally interesting to me and I sincerely want you to sit down and write me lengthily on them. Pass over the little events of the day and tell me the happiness of the month. But first of all, greet the Christmas day with all the added joy that my youthful wishes can reënforce, your acceptance of Christmas dawn. Think much that day of how I wish it to be happy for you and satisfactory as you retrace, then, the hours of many other Xmas days; think often of the appreciation I'll realize towards you that day of many souvenirs; think often of all the thanks I've ever shown you on those precious days; and then, adding them all in one, realize one-half of what I send you this time in 1917.

Merry Christmas!

JACK

[Eight pages censored or lost.]

This year, mother, Christmas comes in the midst of war; your son is far from you with the crusaders in lands that are foreign and fearful; before the mightiness of war and its struggles for Liberty; before the godliness of the vast vision that every day spreads itself before my wings — wide across the arching firmament, a vision of the forces of right and wrong grappling in one of these epochal combats that decide of the long centuries ahead, — before this mighty Moloch, Christmas seems but a point in the fearful sky that embodies France.

If, then, it has become but a point let us not make its feeble spark that of a Christmas tinsel, but instead, that of a Christmas star — a small but infinitely beautiful star of prayer, of harmony, of hope.

It will be our most substantial gift yet, and will be the truest Christmas we shall have seen flitter by together.

Christmas, regretfully, I shall not fly probably and shall not be able to isolate and éloigné myself from the world for the word of good cheer I would send it, but as the morning sun breaks forth, I shall send the thanks to you, that I owe you over and over again and with them my word for all; at evening, before sleep, with one last look at the Christmas stars, I shall send my Yuletide wishes away on a farewell kiss, and then, having passed a happier Christmas than ever before, I shall retire for the morrow of work and the future of war. I am sure that you will agree that such a Christmas present, now at such a distance, is the best. Only one

people, though, won't get a cent out of my good wishes — that's the Russian: they seem to be prolonging the war by two years and the slaughter and poverty by multiples. I shrink to think of Kerensky's career!

Coming back to your letters, though, — any questions? Ah! A play? No! I have nothing more to do with art, for the moment, nor art with me. I'm not going to try to get anything published at all. What does get reproduced will only be careless notes and unread letters and hurried sketches — their reproduction, in fact, would greatly surprise me, seeing how hard I tried with my serious work last year.

Gee! I get lonesome for you — funny that oceans were ever invented. I get damnably lonesome for you; I want to talk to you at this stage of my life; I want to take you up in my latest accomplishment; I want to show off to you. I get *so* lonesome for you, especially as I have the funny feeling — secret — that I'll fall at the front.

When I think of the triumphant return home 'midst a shipload of comrade heroes, when I see myself walking proudly, joyously, off the gangplank into your arms, and all the luxury and happiness of home and friends, I suddenly shudder, for the grim, grinning vision of aviation sweeps the happy scene brutally away and leaves me gazing into a dry, gray desert where a deep hole gapes, marked by a cross of wood.

All that, though, may be foolish and sentimental, so I pluck up my little god of materialism and say, "Oh! Well, it's the game."

I took all that in before entering, and now that I'm at it — here's to the game through and through and what of life I've got ahead, here's to the red-bloodedness of it all and the victory of a thoroughbred.

You know it is n't always vain to talk about oneself; in fact I have been bragging more about a principle than myself.

Accept now my kindest good-bye for a few days.

JACK

December 27, 1917

DARLING MUZZIE: —

It is awful the way the days go by without my writing you, but my time is very filled with formations and waiting in line and all the rest, which, though it does not accomplish much, nevertheless takes the time away.

At noon I have no extra time and at night a few tired moments are all. Your little diary came the day before Christmas. I was on the point of buying just such a little notebook. The "Vanity Fair" followed and I was pleased to see Aida Arboz's photos in it. Did n't know she had taken the other one's place at the Beaux-Arts.

Great news! Impossible news! In fact I don't fully believe it yet. Anna wrote me. It was n't a whim by any means, but it means a whim. It is the first breath of reality taken by the visionary angel I used to worship on a silent, secret altar back during the three long years at Andover and that even over here I have not forgotten. One always has filmy dreams of beauty when young,

and if later one can see bits of them come back fully alive, it is very pleasing. The same day a couple of other letters came from ancient relations still moaning my departure and oathing in general also.

The dear girl Sylvia sent me three huge packages containing 400 "Rameses" and "Egyptian Deities," chocolate from Maillard, 1 lb. plum pudding, gloves, soap, socks, cigarette case from "Cross," preserves, and everything fine shops could turn out.

As a climax, several letters blew in from you and one from Nana.

The next day, Christmas, Mrs. F.'s outfit came in cleverly wrapped in "New York Times Pictorials" and safety pins. So far, lucky boy, I have received no useless presents, excepting that I don't need any more sweaters.

Christmas Eve I heard Mrs. —— sing at the Y.M.C.A. and listened to taps afterwards as soldiers wending their way back to the different barracks, through the silent, snow-covered streets of the camp. Night covered all, most conventionally, and Christmas Eve seemed but a myth. The only difference it held this first time away from home, this Christmas Eve at war, was that I could get up when I felt like it, instead of 5.30 the next morning.

Christmas morning, when the boys woke up, gave one a sight gladder than any Christmas morn yet. They hollered, as six-year-olds from blanket to blanket, up and down through the bunks and over the trunks, "Merry Christmas!"

These young lads of iron laughed and screamed as kids and wished with kiddish naïveté a merry Christmas to each other. For one second since I have been over here, was War cast aside for the atmosphere of home. Then all died down into the daily routine excepting that dinner came at three — an awfully late hour; so I sat under a strip of mistletoe that had peculiarly strayed into our barracks and there ate Sylvia's plum pudding with Jack S. rather sad because the expected kiss did n't come. In fact, sad visions sprang up off and on that day as a custom was n't kept as at home or a souvenir was n't kept down.

That afternoon was quickly wasted and in the evening a minstrel and Mrs. —— and the movies passed the time away more gleefully than a New York night — from the "Winter Garden" to "Jack's."

Mrs. —— was the first woman I'd seen for ages up here at camp, so that the boys all went "topay" about her singing; the Christmas atmosphere of the Y.M.C.A. — usually cold as a prison — also helped and for another second — a mere dream-second — the haunt of war ceased its halooings in our souls.

The next day I was up by moonlight again and off to fly, but this time — ah, belle aventure! I was at last on those beautiful, dear, sweet, beloved coffins called the modern "chasse" machine. Delicate to handle and therefore dangerous, but powerful, fast, conquering, and therefore Paradise! Months had I watched, here and there and at Tours, experienced and glorious pilots rip up the air with them and in a second darting from

one corner of space to another, doing impossible acrobatics and conquering the greatest forces of the world — those of the unknown infinite; so that as I sped through the air for the first time on them, I was almost purring with the silent joy to know that at last I was doing what my idols had done — that I was piloting these little devils — these little beauties.

December 28

This morning we flew while it was snowing and I certainly realized it. Bumpy! Oh, how bumpy! Whiffs that tickle your nerves till they're silly.

This afternoon we had a lecture and most of the time off, so I'm sitting cuddled up in my upper berth scribbling and reading and smoking and feeling like a comfortable leisurely club man, perfectly satisfied with life. I caught a chance to wash, so I feel better still. I expect your little souvenirs de Noël this evening; in fact, I've made a bet on receiving them.

My vanity is quite tickled to tell you that the Government has considered me worth being a First Lieutenant, so — well, I am one. I feel like a Christmas tree, for I'm buying all sorts of cute gold cords and silver bars and things. On the side, though, it's rather nice to attain that position at nineteen.

There is absolutely no way, though I have tried, to satisfy your wish for a photo before I get to Paris, which won't be immediately as all leaves have been cut off by Headquarters.

Hurry and come to Paris! I feel that I want you here.

But I suppose Mr. W. actually needs you more. He has done everything for you and me, so that it is entirely for him that you would plan events.

Give all my friends my regards.

In this post I am yet for a while a cadet, until I receive my active orders, so my mail must be addressed, "Cadet," though I have officially received my commission from Washington.

Most devotedly, your 1st Lieut.,
A.S., S.C., R.C., A.E.F., U.S.R., U.S.A.
JACK

Aviation Camp
December 29, 1917

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND MRS. M.: —

It was very kind of you to send me all those newspapers, but oh, how homesick it made me! Nevertheless all such remembrances are more than welcome, for we are far from it all; if we do see a daily paper, it is at least a week old.

Dick has written me recently and explains some plans on getting into the machine-guns corps. Perfectly ridiculous! He would probably be enlisted as a private — let's say a sergeant — but that also entitles him as well to an orderly job in a London office — as it would to carrying a machine gun around France, a Baedeker in one hand and a package of cork corn plasters for corns in the other with a physiognomy much like a pack-mule's.

I don't think that would harmonize in the long run

with his "temperament" and his "dramaticism" no matter how patriotically and self-sacrificedly he may have enlisted. There is only one service for him and that is aviation.

Next spring most of us will be useless, so that the entrance exams will be less severe on his weak heart. Over here they are easier yet; as by the stove is sitting a young Harvard lad, who, outside of a few other infirmities, has a torn valve in his heart and he is an excellent aviator.

I would rather see Dick in the American Service, but he ought to try for foreign aviation if he does n't succeed at home, as there is nothing outside aviation worth volunteering for. If he can't do that he would be of better service to his country in the realms of his art.

If he would, on the other hand, get over here as a civilian, he would see for himself, and with a knowledge increased and vivified by the actual sight of war and its conditions, facts totally ignored and misunderstood at home, he would be able to make the wisest choice with regards to the biggest event.

Do convey this all to him, as it is written with much sincerity and experience.

As to myself, I am now at perfectioning school, where I am going through the most scientific pilotship required by these actual fighting machines I am flying. The last touches of aerial strategy, tactics, gunnery, and pilotship are being given me and I await anxiously the precious moment at which I can set out for the front and my career, as a man-hunter.

It will be beautifully adventurous and I am looking forward to a royal time.

At this period of the year, I wish you, with more emphasis than ever, the best returns of all the hopes you conceive for yourself and for all the pride you rightfully place in Dick. May he choose and follow the glorious highway that opens its rare gates for him.

I am most respectfully

JACK M. WRIGHT

December 29, 1917

MY DEAR FRIEND SYLVIA: —

The happiness your packages gave to me easily counterbalances the agony of those who staggered under their weight in transporting them to me. Had I known such an armful of joy was being sent to me, I would have been prepared; I would have sent a special truck to the station to load them and have organized a labor team to unload them as well as an unloading platform, for when I came in from flying, they covered my bunk with their mystery and welcome, from my boudoir (a shelf for soap) to my den (some photos tacked at the head).

As I sit with one of the Deities, incensing these primitive surroundings, I can see in its immortal fumes (for over here such fumes are immortal) the many rôles you have filled for me. You have been a one-man's show.

In sending the plum pudding you were a grandmother to me (they are adorable creatures), by the cigarette-case you became my fiancée (what trickery), while the cigarettes turned you into one of those irresistible

Lenore Ulrich, Theda Bara, or Valeska Suratt — in fact, all three in one.

The socks, — and by the way, I could n't have done better myself — er — I mean if I were a girl, — they named you as that thoughtful friend, a fellow's sister. And what were you not? With candy, soap, and all the forbidden fruit so tempting you were certainly the impersonation of one of these dreams such as only soldiers can dream. All in all you were a dear.

I'd send you an airplane or two, a Zeppelin, or any little war souvenir of appreciation except for the authorities.

It might interest you to know all these little elfs and good spirits you set loose are faring. The gloves have guided a vast silver bird through the opalescent skies and have the promise to be caressing, some day not far off, the deadly little trigger of a machine gun. The plum pudding was burnt in crude peasant rum before the hungry eyes of a couple of young adventurers. Its luxury was in full harmony with the keynote of their hearts. It also immediately harmonized with that of their digestive system, and such harmony! It made the snow melt and the birds sing (though they're only crows around here). The cigarette-case flaps open to one of my teachers, a hero-flyer back from the front, and he says, "Dommage que la belle n'a pas fait mettre son nom à la place du vôtre — dommage." It also offers a cig. now and then to a German prisoner, who always has to have me pull it out for him, as his hands are swollen and awkward from three years' animal labor. But

he never forgets to add, "It does much to remind me of little Katie to see such presents." While as to the cigarettes personally, you know what cigarette fumes witness: the intimate broodings and the secret dreams, the hopes and the reminiscences as well as the very lines I send you and the hearty thanks that accompany them. Last of all, the end is the most emphatic, I place your picture on the bit of barrack wall above my head, between an invitation to a Greenwich Village ball and a helmet worn at the dance of War.

There your image patiently watches, as a guardian angel, the boyish pranks and whimperings of I, me and myself. I don't know just what it thinks of me, of my wild planning and aerial thoughts, but it always seems contented and does n't even get mad when I flirt with it — it is superior enough to spread a good-natured, optimistic veil over the eccentricities of my youth's buzzings and hissings and tinklings.

Gee! You're a kind lady! You're a perfect dear, and I'll take you in your sky-blue frame to soar with me towards my secret abode — my fairy wonderland — the unknown infinite of the heavens.

I don't know just what kind of Xmas you had — doubtless it was happy, for you are always happy, always laughing and smiling as I remember; two dimples prove it. I suppose you had red ribbons and tissue paper all over your room and amongst the glittering presents half buried 'midst such a rush of popularity (I mean the ribbons, etc.). Then you had tea at Sherry's with some jolly friends — about then I was at the camp Y.M.C.A.

cabaret, club, and shopping market — as inviting as an empty barn, cozy and cold, beautiful and barren, you know.

Christmas Eve you went to midnight mass, while I, far from Christianity and civilization, listened to "taps" ring out in the night of France 'midst the snow-tipped tents of the crusaders.

A little later as you were coming home, I woke up, not so much by mental telepathy, as it should have been, or yet by Christmas carolling, but by the blasting of the most recent grave — we have such things over here.

But yet, I am zealous of the holiday that was mine and would never have exchanged it, not even for a Deity. It was the goal of all the thoughts of many other Christmas Eves, in the homes of friends across the sea, and it received their silent message with a serenity I could never afford to miss. Each heart rose as the prayers came to us, and answered back with pride that quiet frosty night, that the heavy work ahead would be done and done well.

This letter is written between Christmas and New Year, so it is my privilege to wish the both of them to you in the gayest garbs they can bedeck. I am not worrying about hopes and inspiration, for such days too many people wish you those wonders. All I want you to do is to have an incomparable time of rollicking fun. To laugh, to dance, to toast, and to forget all those idealistic hopes and inspirations one so worries over every other day, just have for one long day, a merry frolic unforgettable. Do so with the thought that my

loudest laughter and wildest whoops of joy are with you every minute, for the sake of a gay, sporty time. A counter-balance like that is surely needed to keep the world steady 'midst so much of the opposite and it will afford me something of its pleasure just to read about it in your next letter.

Here's to looking at you!

JACK
1st Lt., A.S., S.C., R.C., A.E.F., U.S.R., U.S.A.

(But I don't think it all necessary on the envelope — nor the P.O. either!)

Aviators' Camp, France
January 7, 1918

MY VERY DEAR MUZZIE: —

It has been years since I have written you, and I know it. I have been conscious of it each moment and still more conscious of how it made you feel. I am very sorry as I always am when I don't get a real chance to write you.

I have had a touch of grippe and that retarded my letter somewhat, but now I am back to duty again with my heart bent on flying much more than they'll let me and every other day attending lectures or shooting-range.

I am still flying "tour-de-piste," but soon hope to leave those miserable, monotonous classes of landing — going up and landing — for the spiral class — a good spiral is the hardest acrobatic and much fun is pro-

mised to break up the long hours we stand around in the snow waiting.

Every one that goes up for a spiral always entertains the crowd, so I'm looking forward to a good time. After that my course is — altitude, acrobatics (in general), group flying, reconnaissance, and duel training. Then I'm shipped to the front — oh! the blessed day! Every one is dying to get there. Those who are n't at first soon are, after they've gone through a week of this camp.

There have been some accidents lately, each of which should have been fatal. One was, and the others escaped miraculously. Jack S. should have been killed yesterday, but he escaped with a broken arm and a broken shoulder — probably it will put him out of flying. Anyway, it puts him up for a couple of months, thereby spoiling many of chummy plans.

It also makes quite a hole in my existence to see my daily comrade taken away for the rest of the War. He had my Teddy-bear suit on and it's hopelessly ripped up from the smash.

This camp life has a great deal of beauty about it. The barrack life is beautiful in that you are in immediate touch with the crude necessities of life — not the luxuries. You live in tangency with the elementary factors of life — barren food, log beds, a fire, and there is life. It is beautifully rude and ugly — it is barbarous; it expresses strength and force; it is in true harmony with War.

It reminds you of the heavy wooden chambers where the Vikings sat in the light of their glittering shields and

broadswords. The life outside bears with it the constant spirit of war — machinery and laboring hordes turn, hammer, and construct day after day an increasing camp — a dawning city that is to fashion the fleets of fire and death to rage in the enemy's skies and clash against him.

Constantly there is a rustling on the wintry wind that blows through the barrack streets and hangar aisles — a rustling of something ghostly, a constant remembrance of death that passes on the breeze. Every few days the rustle bursts into a triumphant shriek and another grave is blasted. And on through the days Death whispers her tune of War into our young ears.

There, is a great deal of beauty; there, is a wonderful unit, a whole, a masterful picture of War, of crudeness; it is savage and ugly, but it is beautiful.

I have heard that no Americans will be given leave to Paris any more; if it proves true, it will be a soul blow to me as all that I have in the world, outside of a home across the sea, is back in Paris. I don't know just what I would do if I were never to see Paris again during these months of war. Nice and Biarritz may be pretty, but Paris is beautiful. It has a soul and a beautiful one and one that I am blessed enough to be in divine tangency with through every sense and fibre of my human being. I haven't lost all hopes about it, though. There is always a way, you know.

The main thing now is to get to the front. As soon as I get there I will begin to live. I intend to have a little home there, charming friends, writing and draw-

ing spasms, luxuries and some independence with the added thrills of my daily adventures against the Huns. All my present is in that future, despite the idiocy of being the least bit in the future in this game. But here, a great deal of my present is made on planning the near future which I can permit myself, seeing that there is more reliability in futurity while yet in the stages of training.

Oh! Coming back to gentler thoughts — one wanders off those dark by-paths now and then. In spite of all the atheism I contain, of all my belief in the neutralness that follows death, I cannot quite succeed in chasing away its haunt. But that is only because I'm in this barren, uncomfortable place — later I will lose all thoughts like these in a wild enjoyment of life, caring little about being killed or not — seeking danger and adventure, in fact, rushing through the skies after the Hun, challenging him in duel, and straining my young lips for Youth's blessed kiss from Glory, willing and glad to receive it from Death if necessary, ready for the beauty of its romance.

So now, let's clear up this letter with a little chat — down with the blues!

Tell all my friends that I will write them as soon as possible; but that I have scarcely a moment that is not taken by either flying, lectures, shooting, or sleeping, mostly by waiting in line, my turn, waiting hours — long dull hours in which time goes by in blankness unusable, but necessary. Tell them, though, that when at last I reach the front I'll stop waiting for a while

and will be more at leisure to answer their dear letters. Tell them, moreover, that each letter they send is a bit of home and friendship over here and that no one like a soldier can appreciate their sympathy. A lot of that is perhaps bluff, because I'm really lazy, but if I were n't lazy I would not be a true soldier either, and I don't think they would want anything but the genuine.

I don't suppose that the war could possibly have affected the character of the people at home; it's too new and too far away. I suppose that the teas are just as frivolous and the dinner-parties just as indifferent. I can see the gatherings in salons and studios surrounded by their luxury and intellect and chatting and discussing just as before, flirtation and art in the dim lights or the gay lights 'midst a rustling of gowns and a tinkling of cups and glasses. Everything is undoubtedly the same. You all seem to be passing through this world crisis in which men agonize, hope, and die, without more than a political, a very scant tangency to it.

Over here the people are very changed. True that their gatherings are still chatty and gay and intellectual, but there is always the dominating influence of the conflict at the gates of Paris as though it were just behind the very curtains of the particular salon or studio. There is always a keen comprehension and appreciation of the struggles of the days and nights and years, and always a ready heart of sympathy for the worshipped men who are on leave. You notice the difference if you watch closely; you notice it everywhere, even in the cold heart of the café girl, even in the way people walk to and

fro along the boulevards. There seems to be a spirit of friendship unknown to peace-times, and it draws you closer to the gray houses, their balconies, and windows; to the towers and curving bridges — to all the silent, smiling soul of Paris, the city of War. There is where I hold a great deal of pity for you all — at home. You are not, in your limits even, finding the new spirit that the War has brought.

Paris has not all been able to fight, but all of it has been saturated with the holy spirit of fraternization which the Great War has brought. That spirit will die away, and you shall not have been caressed by it; you shall not have had the blessed opportunity of finding a sort of Paradise, ephemeral but beautiful, ruling the hearts of men.

Ah, mon Dieu! That harmonizes little with this place, for the beans are Sunday's charm here, and I must join the mess-line to wait some more, then I wait in line to wash dishes, — ye gods, how I'm sick of washing dishes, — then I come back to get ready to wait some more. Now you do a little waiting too, until my next letter.

Lovingly

JACK

P.S. Your letter brought a blessed breeze to me last night. I had not heard from you for some time and camp was becoming unsupportable, so that I was glad to get that cheerful bit from the other side and hear about my friend Lief Neandres. His first recognition by

the general public tickles me as though it were my own (in spite of the jealousy it arouses). It makes me think myself far behind to look over that boy's hard years of toil and study and now the first streaks of dawn, the first touch of publicity and recognition — the beginning of a fame that is going to be very real and generous for him, I know. But at the same time I am gaining too; gaining spiritually instead of materially, and I think that that will be important if after the War I am in a position that will enable me to tackle Art.

To Jack Sawhill

January 5, 1918

DEAR JACK: —

It gives me a sense of importance to write a letter to a man who has fallen doing his duty, to write a letter over here at war between two aviators, to one of them who has just gone through one of the bigger thrills of the game. What you have just been through is one of those adventures that go to make up real romance — so rare outside of books. You can be proud of it — proud because you will have gone through an experience others will not have — proud because you have seen Death face to face and have seen what to others is but a distant myth. I envy you.

But outside of that, your fall has produced a very negative effect. We were all shocked at the news (and aviators are n't shocked easily). When I told the boys around the stove what your monitor gave me, they listened silently and sadly, and when the news was known

you were one for whom every one held the truest sympathy, as their faces and few simple words expressed.

Personally, after eight months of constant and increasing comradeship, after being with you every moment of duty and leave for the past three-fourths of a year, I felt an emptiness dug into my existence such as only the absence of a big friend could leave. I know what it means — the obliteration of all the plans we held in common for the front and the comradeship we were to enjoy fighting in the same escadrille. I know what it means and consider it as a loss I shall not forget — rather I do not need to consider it, for its reality weighs upon me each moment as I remember the incident through the days.

I hope, though, that outside of that, you will not be worried further, that you will now see beyond the details of the game, such as "getting ahead" by a class or two, such as getting to the front a few weeks sooner; that the more general character of the sport will show you how it is to be played "all in the present" — that one must enjoy and make the best of each phase as one goes through it without plans or thoughts of the future which could be upset in a second.

You are in aviation — that means you like the game through and through. You like the flying, the reputation, the luxuries of it. Therefore you are to enjoy them all the time, for they are not in the future, but constantly with you. You are to enjoy each phase of it and to live entirely in this the present, within the phase you are going through. The future should never be planned

or counted on or hoped for or expected more than by the vagueness of a few day-dreams. In this game you become absolutely a faithful to the "Rubáiyát" and Omár Khayyám, so do not start brooding on when you will ever get to the front, and then on when you will get a Boche, and then on when you'll be an ace, but take the present and make the most of it — it's a game of the present, so lift the cup of the present and drink it to the chalice and be merry of its wonders. That way is the only successful way of going through aviation — you have no upset plans and you have all the joy in the world.

Just now I can see you enjoying a civilized life — a bit of comfort and cleanliness at last and soon a long leave either to Paris, the city of adventures, or to Nice, the land of sun and flowers and heavenly rest. Either furnish another one of the immortal phases, such as other humans cannot enjoy in this miraculous business of being an aviator.

So laugh! laugh! laugh! for life is FULL of joy. I'll send you the latest Ford jokes to make you see it! Also you need n't worry about reminding me to write Brentano's, for I've actually accomplished that.

Here's looking at you, ol' boy!

JACK

Aviation Camp
January 13, 1918

Well, you blessed boy — those "cigs" were like liqueur for a dinner. They're a most peculiar mixture;

they taste like nothing but Pittsburgh Athletics. I smoke them everywhere — in the camp mud, beside the plane, over flirtatious words to Parisiennes — everywhere in this peculiar world of mine I smoke your particular "cigs" and remember my peculiar — delightfully peculiar friend — Dicky M. — pardon me, Mr. Richard Mansfield the second.

But I can beat even that title: Listen to my latest (I'll take a fresh page): First Lieutenant Jack Morris Wright, A.S., S.C., R.C., A.E.F., U.S.R., U.S.A., R.M.A.

And it's all mine, hélas! How cute it sounds to introduce me. People expect a Maharajah, and find but little me. Mon Dieu!

About your joining the R.F.C., or the machine-gun corps: I wrote your mother considerably on the subject, begging her to communicate my correspondence to you; so doubtlessly you already have found out the news. You seem to be quite a writer at present — mes compliments! Do send me something — just a line or two of your verse or a story or a play. It will mean a lot to me.

Myself, I am not in the proper living conditions to devote much time, though I long to, to Art — only an article in the "Sun" — mere notes — but I was glad to get the $8.00.

I'm in another one of those pictures of war now — a vast camp, a muddy exile, alive with building machines and a daily progress — a factor of energy mingled with the general ugliness of the existence and the dominating atmosphere of the fatal — all very beautifully ugly, bar-

barous, warlike; far from the cushioned dens and the intimate eyes my young heart lies buried in — mourning for me to come back where my soul flickers.

Flying is slowly progressing — painfully slow, though, for I'm aching to get to the front where my dreams have built a little cottage, intimate friends, a bit of Art, a bit of sympathy, and also the thrills of daily man-hunting.

Now, I'm flying the modern duel machine, small and graceful as a maiden — and, like a maiden, dangerous to her enemies and treacherous to her friends. In fact, as I look at the bunks around me, I see some that are empty — one boy across the way in the hospital for a long time; the boy across from him — fell yesterday badly smashed up; above me, my chum of daily duty and Parisian days of pleasure, is no longer there with a cheerful grin, but lies on his back in a plaster cast since six weeks. He fell, too, and his flying suit that I wear shows great gashes in it to tell the silent tale to me as I'm alone, up there, speeding and diving in my plane.

I expect to be at the front soon, though — next month, I hope. All I have left are acrobatics, spirals, altitude, group flying, and duelling — it won't take too long.

Now tell me also all your adventures, your serenades, your elopements, your "units folles." I'm away from the city most of the time, but still manage to receive enough letters from Cupid to fill the mail-box.

How is the drama? Any serious outlooks? Are you studying seriously and hard? You know any kind of a

success — even in Art — can only come from the hardest drudgery and toil. You have to go through Hell, my boy, before you get to Heaven. I suppose you realize it; look at the successes and you'll find hours of damnation and years of hardship and study, nights and days of work.

Well, do write me of your "milles flirtations," etc.

Bien à toi, mon cher, bien à toi

JACK

Aviation Camp, France
January 13, 1918

MY DEAR MRS. F.: —

No one could appreciate wool more than a soldier, especially if it is knit by friendly hands, and more especially if the soldier has the habit of flying through the coldest regions invented for man.

Every stitch has been appreciated over and over, and the history of how the scarf and socks and the whole knitted gift flew with me through the vast distant skies is one long beautiful fairy story of how the poor wanderer appreciated the magic good fortune bestowed by some unknown fairy queen.

It is unsubstantial, I'll admit, to place you on a throne 'midst a land of good fairies, but I can assure you that every step of the coronation is sincere and that as I crown you, my "hurrahs" are loud and strong.

Many thanks for bringing back to me the little dreams I used to have of fairyland. I had almost forgotten them, so materialized had the world made me.

It is good to feel the happiness of a little magic now and then.

The present is also a most practical one, and when in near future days I shall be on some outpost guard, alone, in the clouds, the hours will not be so hard with the warmth you have sent me both in knit and in heart. A double flame shall bear me happy company on my daily missions and I am glad to feel the backing up of all the dear friends I left behind.

Kindly receive my true reconnaissance.

Very respectfully

JACK WRIGHT
1st Lieut., Air Service, A.E.F.

Aviation Camp
January 15, 1918

VERY DEAR MUZZIE: —

Well, I expected to tell you I would be in "spirals" by now, but on my last landing of the "tour-de-piste" class, having a machine that bent to the left, it twined on me when the wheels touched and broke a piece or two. It is the first time I have ever broken anything, which is a nice record.

That same day I was to have my first forced landing, which is disagreeable to have for the first time when you're on a "15" — these modern machines, especially, — when as the motor "poops" on you and dies you look overboard on nothing but vineyards stretching a network of wires under you so to better catch your wheels on coming down and "flip" you.

However, I "pancaked" so as to touch all points at once and not roll ahead thereby smashing down on top of the wires instead of swooping into them. As a result not a scratch was made to the machine and I was very happy.

I am living near a town which Frenchmen abhor all over France; nevertheless it gives me great joy to get there once in a while, after an hour's train ride and a long walk through the mud. Its coal-dark streets thrill me because their cobblestones ring with the going of shoes of people; its ugly houses seem sweet villas of civilization, and on the outskirts of the town it makes me happy to see a bit of nature that is grouped and arranged into scenery — little ponds with their tall pine trees and the mound of a hill half hiding a peasant house — something that is more like earth and less like the abandoned planet I am used to daily.

Of course, when flying I can feed my eyes on the rolling variety of the country, but it does me good to come next to it; to look at the trees rising next to me, to breathe in the fragrance of a blossomed night, and to muse at the phosphorescence of a pond gleaming just under my feet. I appreciate these weekly expeditions to the ugly city and its meaningless bits of nature as a prisoner let loose in a sun-sparkling garden of hollyhocks and crystal fountains.

The town itself — I mean inhabitants — are stupid, awkward, innocent, and corrupted; they are low humans — almost animals as they sneak about in the black night of their tortuous streets. Now and then you

can see them under a rare light — it's an old man whose stocking of coins has blotted out the stupid moments when as a boy he felt the virile sap rise within him — moments nevertheless that were the whole romance of a life — his life.

Or else it is a girl — fifteen or thirty — there is little difference in the age here excepting that the one's face is a little more red than the other — both are naïve and sheepish. It is a girl, then, who has waited on soldiers for the past three years of war, who has been at their wild toastings, has collected their tips and their roughness, and now she stops as you pass, blinks at you, and expects a soldierly buffing, a grisly slap on the shoulder. Alone again she probably wonders what it all means — thinks it the caressing and pleasure of humans — pleasures secret and vile, but perhaps good — doubtlessly the only heaven, and then she picks up an old ten-cent novel entitled "Fires Divine" and absorbs it, practices the gestures, notes down the witty conversation.

The next day she exists between labor and the talk of peasants who are humans of the soil and about their wine — joke of the vices of the lowest degree, for they never rise above the soil, never get rid of their mud; they enjoy it, wallow in it, laugh about it.

If only the girl was entirely and madly devoted to vileness, she would be a unit, a picture, a beautifulness, but she is not; she is awkward and timid and yet desirous. Burning more through curiosity and idleness than by the fires of the object itself — passion.

It is a pitiful sight. War has changed it a little; the

directness and roughness of the men of the trenches have driven out some of the timidity of these creatures of the soil, but still they drift around between the kitchen, the wine cellars, and the dark cobblestone street, a picture of the lowliness, of beastliness, smeared with the grease of the dingy peasant houses and the mud of the soil.

Between the camp and the town I am having a wonderful, a precious education in ugliness; it is a literary note of great value, an experience of life — a following out of my yearning to live life to its entirety.

I expect to be out of this camp in three weeks. Then I move to a small camp a couple of miles away. There I'll stay two weeks I suppose and either go to a divine French shooting school or to the front.

Another friend fell yesterday. His face is all done up in bandages with a hole for his mouth. But he is cheery and glad to be alive.

As I look about me I find the bunk opposite empty. He's laid up from a fall. The bunk across the way — the same; the bunk below — the boy was shot and badly laid up. The bunk next to me — the lad is laid up in the hospital, too; and "laid up" means for three months over here, for after your physical injuries you have to cure your nervous system by going to Nice or somewhere.

At least, I see the daily papers — I get the Paris "New York Herald" every evening at the camp paper studio.

You cannot imagine my joy to be nearing the front!

Much love and much satisfaction to you.

Your

JACK

Aviation Camp
January 16, 1918

MY VERY DEAR MOTHER: —

What awful news I have received! Ye gods! For reasons I cannot tell you, it appears that all of us advanced men in "chasse" work are to be doomed to drive those awkward, elephant, uninteresting machines of "Reconnaissance" and "Artillerie Réglage." I, who counted so much upon speeding through the fire of combat on a small, fast, duel machine, and setting out independently in the skies to make my reputation, am to be tied down to directing artillery fire and other such long, monotonous, negative, unfighting drudging. It will be only for this spring, but that means three months and three months mean a lot in this game — they are a life time with us — a lifetime in two ways.

Not counting the regret of giving up this duel training (chasse) which held my heart so intimately, not counting the insipid training for the rest of the winter, or those craft as big as houses with front verandas and just about as capable of flying!

Oh! quel manque de délicatesse, d'art, que ces penguins de Reconnaissance et de Réglage — Dieu me soulage!

This sport is beginning to show itself up too. It is, in short, a little world, somewhat aerial, and very fast-turning — where that which takes years to be done in civilian life, here takes a day, an hour. Your plans are broken, your friends disappear, your intimate chums are scattered away from you as soon as you have gained their friendship.

The scenery is shifted constantly, rapidly, in the climax of the act — in its very beginning — just before its wondrous end.

I met Jack Sawhill — I was his chum — he is away forever now, broken up in the hospital.

I met Bruce Hopper, a literary chap, breezing from Montana. I knew him intimately and he me. Last evening an order swooped down, caught him, and now he is back in Tours.

I was just beginning to know J. R. Edwards (son of the admiral) after four months being together. I hoped to make a friend of him. He was booked up by another order and landed from his duel machine into one of those clumsy ignorami, called "Reconnaissance" machines, that can't even make a decent turn.

While as for feminine friendship and the least little ray of the gentle and sympathetic in my big, young heart — that is too far off, too impossible to be even dreamed of.

Gee! I wish I knew where Sherman was. I surely would shake hands with him! He hit the nail on the head when he said what he said! The blessed old man!

To-day the wind is blowing sixty an hour and the clay-mud is feet deep; so we're not exactly flying — just a lecture now and then, so you won't go entirely mad. But believe me with all that I so sincerely and constantly regret in my exile, I would never, for any fortune, change places and go back again to what I left — to all the art and luxury and sympathy I left behind. Never, never! And then, in spite of all War's trickery,

I'm just devilish enough to have a wee hope in the near future; in fact, I firmly intend to sound life to a very deep degree. That is a great deal, though without "chasse" work it is not enough. Perhaps, too, I'll come through to at last be able to take up "chasse" work, when this summer it will be possible, then I'll have my chance, for I'm with the first American Aviators in France against the Hun. By the way, I think I hate the Hun. I certainly hate the Russian — there are a good many of them in town and they've learned well not to get very near an American. They stay out or get knocked out.

Now, dearest woman I know, do not take War so seriously. You are blessedly far away from it all, so don't bother to try and hypnotize yourself about it. Just enjoy, enjoy, enjoy — all the joys and laughter the world contains, for it will make me happy to catch the feeble echo of your laugh through the lines of your letters — your dear, sweet letters.

With all the devotion that years — I am but beginning to realize — can weave into my sonly heart —

I am your servitor and son

JACK
1st Lieut., A.S., S.C., U.S.R.

Aviation Camp
January 16, 1918

MY DEAR MR. W.: —

Your letter brought me immediate joy, for I immediately pounded on the word 200 cigs. per 10 days!

I fed on them as at a banquet — a banquet with all its royal luxury.

Excuse me, but personally I think it is one of the most brilliant manœuvres of the year. I'll surely recommend you for the "Sat. Eve. Post's" "Who's Who." The gift's little mystery only added to its charm, and I'll certainly inform you accordingly whenever I receive a package. If it is concerned with your business, I wish you'd tell me what the profession is, for it's the most successful business to me, that I have ever seen you undertake. You certainly were a Wise man when you chose that line, and I congratulate you Wright away.

The advice you gave me on cigarettes has not passed over indifferently. In spite of appearances, I always reflect over your advice and, in fact, usually follow it to my own success. Cigarettes, though, I have been smoking for about three years. I am somewhat of a dreamer and enjoy their perfume and subtle taste of an epicurean, a poet, or some other such a sensitive and perhaps insane creature. I find inspiration in their nonchalant fumes, or, at least, I think I do, and hypnotism, you know, is the best remedy for any malady and therefore the best way to be inspired, if, of a literary nature, you hunt for inspiration, muses, or other such filmy nightmares.

However, I do not inhale — I am a very harmless sinner and seeing that the vice will not grow on me, seeing that I am able at will to leave off for three months at a time, as I used to up at school, I hope you will not find me an everlasting prodigal.

Slipping over to your paragraph on aviation, how does this sound?

The New York man of business or leisure usually spends his week-end at his country club, his golf club, etc. He does it through desire, habit, style, or lack of anything else. I don't see why, if properly introduced, it would not be just so much more stylish and attractive for him to go out to his aviation club, where he would soon be flying very comfortable and safe machines, built and furnished for pleasure, where he could take his friends up with pride and where at the same time, within the majestic manor of the club, tea would be served to dancing and orchestra, dinners on the lake would be brilliant, and royal balls could be arranged often. Would it not be the latest note of modernism and therefore the most successful scheme possible? You see it appeals to man's most appealing — Pride, Luxury, Style, Change, and a little breeze of Adventure. Would not such a tempter to the palate of man's epicureanism be a great financial success, if properly introduced and well capitalized at first?

You also speak of going into the scientific branch at present. Pardon me, Mr. W., but I have come over here to fight and *fight* is my all in all until the war is over. I have seen too many slackers and I have too young and eager a heart myself to ever be satisfied with anything less than the utmost of this new world of war into which all my equals have been thrown and in which they are finding new life. Excuse me, but I am going to fight.

The officers you mention will doubtless prove useful to me sooner or later, as I am bound to run across them.

I have told mother all the news of my progress and my outlook; she has communicated it to you with all the joy I put into telling her about it.

Though there are a few hard moments, materially, the spirit of the game never vanishes and it constantly fills every one of the young hearts about me; whether an ex-newsboy or an ex-millionaire. They are all transformed into happy cavaliers eager for the Great Adventure, and strong with a morale that is bound to make good and uphold the standards of the country they crusade from.

Every boy around me is such as is rare in civilian life. They are characters, they are sports, they are sure to be successes; they are a new blood, a-bubbling over in the sinewy but worn veins of France. Why, they are so in harmony with the common cause, though they come from miles away where about the college halls war is an ancient myth, that they are already changing and dissolving somewhat into the Great Spirit of France; they sing French songs instead of rag-time; they talk French whenever they can and are forgetting their first complaints — to admire the people of whom they had at first seen but pleasure-loving and practical inefficiency.

They are realizing the silent undertow of the French that made café frequenters and effeminate salon chatterers turn back at the Marne a foe that had set out to conquer the world and outpoured in the most brilliant array of modernism and efficiency an army the

avalanche of which has never been witnessed since the fabulous days of Alexander.

And now I wish you a great celebration with which to welcome in the New Year with a real good hour of laughter and fun. Here's to the frolick — may I join in the toast with my hearty good wishes and cheer.

Respectfully

JACK

1st Lieut., A.S., S.C., U.S.R.

January 19, 1918

MY DEAREST MOMMIE: —

Spring has burst across the wintry wilderness; Congo fruit jungles are blossoming through the camp; many little Fords go chirping through the branches and sow Ingersolls all along the way — that is, I have just received my active orders. I can wear all the paraphernalia, silver bars, gold and black hat cord, black braids, gold silk braids, collar decoratums, and also the gold aviation eagle on my heart. I can dress up to beat the Kaiser, and more than he, have somewhere to go. I feel like a Christmas tree, with an added sense of importance that tickles my vanity and blushes up especially when I try to appear natural as I walk down a camp avenue.

Oh, yes! I've had a first salute: a beauty; *just the way these privates ought to!!!* I, who in the French Army as poilu covered with dust on a banging truck, and in the American Army was a blinking, gawking door-keeper, jumping up and down to attention for

second lieutenants, and being kicked from the first to the fifth flight by thousands of corporals, I, am now ye honorable and much-respected, much-waited-upon first lieutenant and pilot. I'll have to grow a beard too, for I look like a baby — which is n't the exact appearance to front these gangs of fighting Yankees.

One private guessed immediately that I had just put on my stripes, probably because I had been moving a garbage can with him half an hour previous, and as he saluted, a broad grin spread across his tough cheeks — it was beautifully sincere and I could n't help laughing.

All the boys, as I walk down the barracks, wish me good luck, stand at attention, and then jump on me and muss me all up. Confound these lower creatures — I must move immediately to the officers' barracks.

The next thing to do, now that I'm a gentleman again for the first time in many months, was to go and have tea. Imagine having tea, but such is the gentle and civilized custom of the officers; so off I went to the Biltmore — which was the Red Cross. Now the Red Cross is divided distinctly in two. In front of the counter a long line of soldiers and cadets wait to buy a tin cup of coffee and a sandwich, to the worn-out needle of a Victor. Behind the counter, laughing as easy life permits, sit the favorite privileged few — the officers sipping chocolate, dipping into choice confitures, and being waited on with china ware — that they do not have to wash afterwards either — at a few long white tables, surrounded by a whirligig of white-and-blue nurses.

The tea was just exquisite — a couple of friends,

newly commissioned, were with me. It was the first time we had been clean in two months, so we felt as in tuxedos and were immediately very affected in voice, awkward in gesture, and insipid in conversation — fluent chat, such as officers — the highest wits — always are supposed to be keeping up amongst their intellectual circles. Then, O wonderful sight of brilliant chandeliers and glistening tables of feasting, I walked over to the officers' mess, much embarrassed and wondering why I was n't banging my good old mess kit in a line unending such as I had always done for the last nine months. Decidedly I had been enthroned, blessed by God, sought by fortune, transported for some vague but important merits, high into the celestial on the kind wings of smiling, suddenly visible angels from Heaven — that is, Headquarters.

I ate on china; I ate a feast and I ate without the forecast of standing in another line out in the cold night to wash greasy tin dishes in cold water and freeze my hands all the way back home to the barracks.

More still, German prisoners ran around to get the platters and see that I was served. The sergeants of the mess addressed me "Sir." The privates stood silently at attention, daring not to utter so much as the title "Sir" lest it disturb my tranquillity of thought.

The next morning I was awakened by the rush of my friends to stand at roll-call at 5.30 A.M. I grunted and rolled over to doze off another hour or two. Then I proceeded to dress, received the compliments of the morning from the sergeant who, the night before, had

had me working on hands and knees all over the barracks floor, and when he asked me if I would leave everything straight in the bunk when I left for the officers' barracks, I merely remarked, "I'm not living here any more."

Then I brought my baggage over, after a luxurious breakfast, to the new barracks where an orderly opened the door for me as I entered. At noon a chicken dinner with a fine dessert awaited me, and I sat opposite the next room where I could watch, with a broad grin, the boys I had left standing in the winding, serpentine sleepy line to receive their Sunday beans.

Feeling dressed up and as though I ought to go somewhere — ought to harmonize the surroundings more with my dignity — I entered church for the first time in nine months — the last time nine months ago was only because, at school, I was forced to — and after hearing a sermon from Bishop Brent of the Philippines had the honor of being introduced to him by the former chief of the truck service who is bunking now next to me — nor more than I — in fact not as advanced.

That, too, is funny. I had always seen him flittering here and there, out with the section, 'midst high French officials at well-loaded tables, at intimate parties in the Section Headquarters — rolling around in his staff car. Now I am his equal in rank and beyond him in aviation.

I have two titles for my book — or your book rather. The first is the best for an unknown writer who wants the curious to pick up his book with interest in the

author's cleverness rather than a passing thought of sympathy such as the second title would impress.

First title (to be used) ZZZZZZZ . . . BANG! on a cover like this: Streak of lightning (cannon flash), color, red (bright), background color, yellow (bright), title color, red (bright).

The cover must be of that rough soft leather that binds so many of those small delightful books — otherwise the color scheme and the title would produce a cheap effect.

As few people will buy and those will buy because they are decidedly interested and more especially because my buyers will be the mothers and wives (of whom I thought in making up the title), the price must be high, must be extravagant — it makes the book important and takes away such cheapness as the title would invoke to certain brains.

I'll sign my name JACK WRIGHT. I have sent you the dedication already. Here is the cover design again — larger. The Z's had, to avoid similarity with the flash of lightning to which they are near placed, better be in writing form.

Here is the foreword, but you — the receiver of the letters, my mother, must put in the preface — don't make it an advertisement. On one of the forepages, the first one, the criticisms and words on my letters — of those big men, such as Prof. ——, ——, ——, may be written in a column with their respective names underneath each one's words.

Here, then, is the foreword: —

"These letters are taken directly out of the hurried office of Mars; they are notes on the exact shell-holes "*your*" man will crouch in, on the precious stars and mighty heavens he will look up to, on War's fight, toil, and divinity, on War's Romance, and War's exile, on War's New World and the new life it spreads, each passing day, to every human proud to have a soul across the Atlantic firmament in the first grasping streaks of dawn. They are secret notes that Mars held nearest his heart, that were dictated to me on top of blasting mines and of which the undersigned stenographer who received Mars' dictation, takes an enthusiastic interest revealing their message to you."

As I have none of the letters in hand and cannot illustrate them, I do not desire the book illustrated with either photographs, sketches, or decorative panels. The paper will, like the leather cover, be rough and rugged-edged. You've seen it often.

I suppose, as you will notice by the terming of my foreword, that the letters are to be reproduced in letter form. When it is published, send me a dozen copies or so which I shall autograph and send to various intimates.

Gee! These officers' barracks are neat, clean, barren — so much like Brown's Hotel — as compared to the clubby, American atmosphere of the boys in sweaters and slippers back in the cadets' barracks. However, there's a piano and a couple of armchairs along with a couple of useless orderlies. I always did like butlers —

they are such delightfully useless but ornamental creatures — pardon, I mean ornaments.

Just heard of a witty trick done recently by a friend. He was doing acrobatics when he went into a "vrille." That's very bad near the ground if it happens accidentally; he came out but to go into another — the ground coming up like lightning when he kept his calm enough to notice an "aileron" flapping — useless — and traced the break back to a missing bolt, whereupon he — marvelous brain, he must have divine control — undid his belt and stood up a little, full in the dash of a death-spin, a sure, fatal fall, grabbed the disjointed piece and held together with one hand over his head while with the other, in one of these very tricky machines, he made his landing safely with the other hand.

He is a hero that not only the papers ignore, but most of the camp. He has the compliments of us aviators and I can assure you that means something.

Great joy! To-morrow morning I enter spirals; that will be the beginning of more rapidly succeeding and more vital events of interest; that is, more dangerous slips and drops to be caught up in true, more business-like, warlike flying. Now good-bye for the while.

Keep good and don't worry.

Very lovingly

JACK

I hope you understand the appreciation I hold for the effort you are making to publish a book of my recent letters. It is very keen.

Aviation Camp
January 22, 1918

DEAREST DEAR: —

Just a word to tell you how my world is turning around. It is turning around very rapidly, for I have just been doing spirals yesterday. That is to say, you're hung up in space some three thousand feet when you cut down the motor and start. For a second, everything is silent as the silence of night, when you're walking towards a precipice, as the silence just before the hand strikes down to plunge in the dagger. Just then I tried to think of my instructions — absolutely useless. I was thoroughly stage-frightened, but I was nearing the precipice, the dagger was quivering to plunge down, so I started. I pulled the plane over on a perpendicular and down; the back a little on the stick to make her spin lightly, and off she went, the clouds whirling by as in a cyclone — a war of the gods and the wind roaring at me like a continual fog-horn and pulling on me hard. Round like a top, down, down towards the earth, as in a falling merry-go-round the plane led me like a bolt, through space.

I remember vaguely, acknowledging that if the bus did smash, it was nevertheless a great experience, and that was the height of the game. It was a great adventure, 'midst the wild, invisible forces of the clouds, high up from other humans. It seemed, so to speak, like when the movie shows angels sweeping by diagonally in the heavens, with the clouds whizzing around.

The spiral was increasing in rapidity on my left, rather behind me, for I was turned to the right watching the needle on my tecometer, pushing with my feet accordingly, and trying to convince my hands, in spite of them, to pull back farther and over, so to make the plane spin tighter and on a perpendicular; however, my hands refused to go far. I just could n't make them.

By then the wind was roaring so loudly and the plane whizzing me around so fastly and downwardy that I started to wonder whether I was in a "vrille" or not. (Fatal if you don't come out of it.)

I looked over my left shoulder and saw the horses spinning around regularly and decided all was well; by chance I glanced over my right shoulder at the clouds — OOOOOOOh! that empty feeling; then all was funny.

I looked back inside the machine again and recovered promptly, and with another one thousand and one prayers to something, some one, somewhere. Looking over at the sky when you're spinning seems to create a cone with the far end in the bottom of the sky. Anyway, you can wager no sailor even of a submarine would take more than one look at it.

Enfin — I came out ages from the circle I was supposed to reach without pulling on the motor again, so just had to. When I felt the machine grip earth again, I felt as though I had just finished a heated debate in the Senate, and won; had just finished a complicated trial for suicide, and won; had just finished a desperate suit for a star in the Century, and won.

I immediately was sent up for my second, which is a

good plan while you've still got the confidence left in you. My second, I felt was better, so that when I came out of it, it was as though I had held my breath under water a long time. I just burst loose and sang and shouted at the top of my voice, in English, French, and Yiddish. On my third spiral, when coming out, I was evidently dangerously flat, for my propeller just about stopped and then did, which cut off the chance of pulling on the motor again, which I needed to, being over a forest a half-mile from where I should be. (The wind had drifted me.) So I tried to crank the propeller — not that I got out and did it — not exactly. I dove down a couple of hundred feet and the force of the wind, just as a private chauffeur, cranked it for me. I pulled on the gasolene; she winced and the motor gave a whoop and a pull and so I skimmed above the trees. So far, I am slowly and contentedly easing into the life of orderlies and good meals and general respect of an officer and gentleman.

I might have added, too, that in between the spirals, yesterday, I saw the last twirl that was the farewell second in the life of a boy in the class next to mine. I don't feel heart-broken for him so much as for the mother back home.

LETTER OF LIEUTENANT BRUCE C. HOPPER

American Air Service, France
February 27, 1918

MY DEAR MADAME WISE: —

Writing you has been a duty which I have long realized, and yet postponed indefinitely, thinking that a joint expression from all of Jack's friends would be more fitting, and perhaps more representative of the feeling caused here by his death. A letter has come from Mr. Wise, however, which prompts me to write you personally, to assure you his effects will be taken care of, and his grave well marked. I had been transferred to another camp a few days before Jack's accident. My purpose is to fly back the first day I have free, and bring all his things to Paris. I shall write you at once upon so doing, and also tell you of Jack's resting-place in the little camp cemetery, and the provisions I will have made for its upkeep.

If words of a comrade can bring any sweetness to the sorrow of a mother, I offer mine freely. "Who would not sing of Lycidas — Lycidas who is dead ere his prime." Jack was my soul comrade in life, and in death he is Lycidas; when I visualize the panorama of the last dramatic months I see all my experiences of war and war's preparation colored by a soft and mellow light, the light of a personality which enveloped me like a cloak. That light was Jack. And in memory let me praise

him, just as in life I revered his talents and noble character.

I first met Jack on board the Touraine, along with a few hundred other young fellows fresh from the classroom, coming to France for a share in the big fight. Jack was different from the rest of us in that he experienced a home-coming feeling when we sighted the banks of the Gironde. It was his France that welcomed him, the France he had learned to love intimately. We were first drawn together by discussions on poetry — Jack defending free verse of the modern school against my attacks in favor of the sonnet and older forms. Many times the battle of the books waged high with no decisive results, for we were each confirmed believers in our respective poetical faiths. In Paris he went wild with the ecstasy of reminiscence. He would point out place after place where he had done some particular thing, from the Luxembourg Gardens to the Montmartre. We visited his former residence, and even picked out another near Boulevard Saint-Michel, where we intended to seclude ourselves for six months after the war, there to write and work together.

Much against our inclinations we went into the camion service instead of the ambulance. The work in munition convoi was always distasteful to Jack. The dust of the roads irritated him, and the humdrum work of handling the cases of shells bored him terribly. He was given a special trailer for a studio, and relieved as much as possible of such work as greasing the trucks. All the time at the front he seemed in a semi-trance, a

sort of nostalgia, and found vent only in long walks. I can remember so well trying to find him at times, and learned to go to his favorite hill overlooking the Aisne. There he would be walking aimlessly and a solitary figure in the background of glorious poppies and bluets. He lived within himself those days, entering but seldom in the camp sports, and certainly far from happy. On one occasion he brightened — his birthday. The camp artist (a French decorator), Jack Sawhill, and I helped him celebrate the day with a little supper in the trailer. Soon after that he left on permission, enlisted in aviation as you well know, and after his first difficulty was settled became happy again in his progress in mastery of the air.

We came to Tours together, and learned to fly. Jack realized more than most of us the larger significance of flying. He came down from his second flight convinced in his mind that he never would become a pilot. Flying was so tremendous in reality, so supernatural, so akin to some divine privilege. The immensity of space appalled him. He told me he always felt as though invisible hands of a cosmic giant were supporting the frail wings of linen and wood, as on he rushed with the gripping power of the propeller. He was always a keen psychologist, and reflected on his mental flux while in the air. His naïve curiosity prompted him again and again to "stunt" with his plane, long before he was master of the controls. A rivalry sprang up between him and Jack Sawhill, as to who would make the most rapid progress in winning the much coveted French

brevet. One day Jack circled the field counter-traffic, that is he turned to the right on the take-off when the two balls at the pilotage indicated compulsory turning to the left. For that error he was taken off the flying list for two or three days, much to Jack Sawhill's delight. Jack Sawhill, however, landed cross-wind the next day, and was given a similar punishment. This friendly rivalry continued till Jack Sawhill fell in a Nieuport, and was taken to the hospital with a broken arm.

At Tours we were four in one large room — calling ourselves the "Four Musketeers" — Big Bill Taylor was Porthos; Jack Sawhill, the fiery enthusiast, was d'Artagnan; I, because of my few additional years and gravity, was Athos; and Jack was Aramis. Jack was Aramis without Aramis's later religious hypocrisy, Jack the polished and refined, the master of délicatesse, the carefully dressed, the quiet-mannered — yes, Jack was Aramis. We chided him a good deal upon his vanity, which pleased rather than annoyed him. He was ever conscious of being observed, and wished to appear at his best, be it his hair, of which he was justly proud, or the rubber boots issued to us by a paternal Government. We had a wonderful time in that room, one of the jeux where dice were défendu, and cards seldom seen. Jack had no time for the vulgarities of barrack life, a characteristic well understood by visitors who dropped in to get warm and smoke.

Our next experience was at the camp where Jack was killed. He and Jack Sawhill came down after three happy days in Paris. I had missed the two Jacks and

was tickled to have them with me again, even as fellow-sufferers in the hardships of a newly constructed school. Flying was slowed up by the continuous rain; we all had colds and sore throats. I went to the camp hospital late in December, and was about starved. Jack tried to see me, but could not, but he saved a lot of delicacies and good cigarettes from his Christmas box, and showered me with such good things when I got back to the barracks.

The first one killed at our camp was a Lieutenant Paul, who went into a vrille on his first "tour-de-piste" in the smallest type of plane. We were all greatly depressed by the accident, and Jack more than most of us. He said to me: "Strange to think of life as complete when a fellow is killed like Paul was . . . yet everything laid out for him to do has been done . . . he finished his work . . . his turn had come." Jack's own turn was not far away, even though his fatalistic tendency had not prepared him fully to meet it.

Jack and I attended all classes together at the last camp. We were ready for spirals when I received orders to go back to Tours to fly-observers for a while. That was January 16. I bade him good-bye, saying I should meet him in Paris, or at the front, or maybe behind the moon. He reminded me of our Latin Quarter prospect "après la guerre" and promised to keep the rendezvous. His rendezvous was not with me, but with Death.

The news, a few days later, of his last spiral returned me. I could not believe it, a blackness came over me,

and I asked: Could it be that our Jack, our Jack was gone? — my heart burned with thoughts of him, my comrade and your son. It seems that he spiralled down from a thousand metres with a cold motor, found he was gliding short of the field, and tried to lengthen his landing angle. He flattened out at fifty metres altitude, the plane stalled, then wingslipped to the ground.

It is not for me to say it could have been averted. Jack had formed the habit of jerking off his goggles to land, saying he did so to protect his eyes should he smash. The wind would always bring water to his eyes, and he always appeared to have been rubbing them after landing. I think the dizziness caused by a spiral, heightened by water-blindness of the eyes, made him misjudge his altitude. But he is gone. He was a man in a man's war. He had in abundance the qualities of a master pilot. He was a camarade jusqu'au bout.

My own mother has been dead for thirteen years. Roaming and university study accustomed me to a motherless life, so that before coming to France, I had lived with no consideration for that link with God — a mother. War and social isolation changes one, and I was soon to long for the tie I had never known, save as an unthinking boy. Comrades would receive letters from home, full of kind thoughts and little anxieties, full to the seals with the love only a mother can give, that brave and wonderful affection, which strains between fear and pride, and sends the loved one to the battle-line to fight and die — like a soldier. What a triumph for a mother to give a son. What a stimulant

to "carry on" a mother's tenderness. I listened with intense loneliness when friends would tell of good news from "home and mother." I tell you this because it was Jack who understood my feeling, and it was Jack who shared his mother's messages with me. What beautiful letters they were. What an appeal to a home-hungry boy. They revealed to me a magnificent fellowship between mother and son, an identity of spirit to which my heart of emptiness could aspire, but never attain. Once you mentioned your pleasant task of copying all his letters on a typewriter. What treasures they must be to you now — living companions in the dark hours of memory, so full of Jack, his eagerness, his hopes mounting high, and his visualized goal as a pilot and artist.

> "Music, when soft voices die,
> Vibrates in the memory;
> . . . .
> . . . .
> And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
> Love itself shall slumber on."

Not an ordinary rôle has been yours in giving a son to a noble cause. Mothers have offered their sons, and heroically too, since time's evolution of nations first revealed to the necessity of war. But you have been the mother of an aviator. Jack belonged to the race of aerial cavaliers. To them earth is a place of bondage, for they have tasted the thrills of the heavens. To their ears comes the music of the universe, and to their eyes the vistas of other worlds denied to the earth-bound. Only those who have heard the upper winds whistle through the struts, only those who have invaded the

vast and vacant chambers of unexplored atmosphere, only those who have roamed through the cloudy lanes of the great above can claim kinship in that race of men. The tremendous thrust of the motors, the gentle pressure on the "manche à balai," the delicate adjustment of the essence manettes, all these are factors in the balanced life of a pilot. They represent laws and powers which should not be abused. They are a, b, c's in the aviator's manual, and mark the boundary-line between the earthly and sky dominions. They are the secrets of the aerial race, and secrets Jack knew.

Like the rest of us Jack early adopted the care-free swing to life in the air. One cannot worry and fly. He had a song on his lips to the last, a smile for every difficulty, and a shrug for unpleasant situations. As he often explained to me, his emotions in line of flight ranged from supreme ecstasy in the sheer fantasy of a long glide to the panicky fear which comes to a pilot when a collision with some other sky-pilgrim seems inevitable. Every day a pilot runs the gauntlet of human psychology, as much as a terrestrial experiences in months. To one as temperamentally contructed as Jack all this marvellous phenomenon of the sixth sense, the "feel" of flying, was an endless study. He loved it all, and made others understand it better because of his finer perceptions. Other than his beautiful personality I think this, the appreciation of the powers of the air, was Jack's greatest contribution to the pioneers of American aviation in France. As the dreamer of real castles in the air, Jack shall long be remembered. As

the comrade of my first year of the War, he shall be enshrined in my memory.

Accept, mother of Jack, the sympathy of one who loved him, and cannot forget.

Sincerely

BRUCE C. HOPPER
1st Lt., A.S., S.C., A.E.F.

LETTER FROM PIERRE BOURDELLE TO THE MOTHER OF JACK

MADAME

J'apprends avec stupeur que mon seul ami vient de tomber. C'est aimé de la connaissance humaine qu'il montait vers l'idéal qu'il voulait obtenir par ses propres moyens.

Joignant au sang d'une race nouvelle un courage antique il est mort, je vois, en toute ferveur — Quel verbe divin entendait-il là-haut pour perdre ainsi la volonté de vivre?

Je me souviens de ses paroles confiantes. Il disait que l'aviation avait surpassé ses rêves qu'il avait cru plus vastes que la vie elle-même et que cela c'était en vérité un miracle.

J'ai cru voir là que son âme se refuserait à redescendre. Il avait choisi la voie douloureuse mais il croyait en l'immortalité de l'être pourvu qu'il soit pensant.

Et qu'importe alors qu'il soit roseau? Est-ce que ceux que nous avons aimés, Madame, peuvent mourir? Est-il pour vous en ce moment une seule voie intérieure qui prétende affirmer la vie éternelle? Non! La personalité, à peine touchée de grâce et de néant se mêle à l'univers et déjà le corps remonte, de la terre où il repose vers le ciel, sous la metamorphose, en fleur. Les fleurs ont déjà sans doute reçu les larmes du ciel sur sa sépulture.

Mais où que se trouve cette dernière, Lui sera tou-

jours présent à mon esprit. Combien de rêves, en effet, nous avons élancé que je ne veux pas détruire et dont sa mort me fait un devoir!

Il succomba pour l'exemple. Par son attachement au pays de la pensée réelle, exprimée d'ailleurs dans sès œuvres, il lui avait fait d'avance le sacrifice d'une existence utile qui le devint plus encore de ce fait même. C'est donc à moi, son Benjamin, de relever son bouclier et de reprendre la vie sans défaillance pour qu'enfin triomphe l'esprit.

Je me rappelle de ses yeux clairs, le jour où je le revis, et de ses cheveux blonds qui semblaient le casque d'or et de raison; nous nous étions reconnus comme si l'océan ne nous avait jamais séparés. La mort nous désunit moins.

Il savait mes espérances; j'admirais sa force simple de caractère dont j'étais fort éloigné. Mais je crois pouvoir vous dire — mieux qu'avec le mot d'honneur qu'en prétendant qu'il quitta, pur, le monde, avant les désillusions — en vous affirmant de faire mon possible pour ramasser ses ailes et reprendre l'exécution de son rêve d'ange protecteur.

La faiblesse française fut de ne savoir haïr — A deux reprises le fer me le rappelle cruellement — je haïrai donc la force et la haine.

Pardonnez à cette audace qui le poussa à abandonner les siens pour courir au droit menacé.

Je le sens d'autant plus que je sais la douleur d'une mère; mais l'existence est ainsi faite qu'il faut que nous tendions de la surpasser pour la diviniser.

Sa fin prouve non combien est triste cette grande aventure de l'homme sur terre mais combien aussi nous pouvons la rendre juste.

Puisqu'il lui fallut d'autres horizons votre devoir est, je crois, Madame, de ne point attrister son âme errante pour lui permettre et d'abord de se dégager et ensuite de revenir vous assister.

Votre tristesse l'éloignerait et le ferait souffrir car puisque l'âme est oiseau — nulle colombe ne peut se désaltérer aux larmes d'amertume.

Croyez bien, que le temps ne doit point amener l'oubli mais le retour étant donné que l'avenir naît du passé, et que le vrai culte que nous devons rendre à sa mémoire est de nous montrer aussi droit et aussi confiant que lui.

Adieu, Madame,

Veuillez agréer mes hommages sincères

(signé) PIERRE BOURDELLE

LETTER FROM THE CELEBRATED FRENCH SCULPTOR ÉMILE ANTOINE BOURDELLE TO THE MOTHER OF JACK

L'absence de Jack me sera toujours présente. Une lettre de mon fils qui n'avait d'autre camarade que lui vous dira sa peine — mais moi, chère amie, qui le sentais un peu mon enfant, l'ayant vu si longtemps grandir — je ne vois rien de plus noble à vous dire — de plus vivifiant pour votre cœur que de copier la lettre admirable que m'écrivit Jack quelques jours avant son ascension — j'y laisse tout son bon cœur y éclaté près de son héroïsme.

Je lui avais déconseillé l'aviation mais il devait monter et sa chute le porte en haut.

LETTER FROM JACK TO ÉMILE ANTOINE BOURDELLE

Le 8 Janvier, 1918
Camp d'Aviation

MES TRÈS CHERS AMIS
MADAME ET MONSIEUR BOURDELLE, —

Cette époque de l'année me ramène plus vivement encore l'hospitalité et les conseils que j'ai toujours reçus si généreusement à vos mains.

Avec tous les remerciements que je dois offrir à l'année de 1917, ceux que mon appréciation a pour vous sont parmis les plus grands car c'est aux moments les plus heureux et les plus décisifs de ma vie que j'ai reçu de vous le conseil et l'encouragement! si chers à un jeune homme.

Mais des remerciements sur papier je les déteste et pour qu'ils ne paraissent pas trop superficiels je vous fournirai le cadre de mon existence jusqu'à ce jour. D'abord ce ne fut pas une existence; ce ne fut pas une vie même — ce fut un paradis — un paradis sur terre.

Tous les rêves, tous les mirages dans les halos desquels m'apparaissait l'aviation ne se sont pas évanouis au jour brutal des réalités. Au contraire, chaque étage d'idéalisme que j'attendais de l'aviation c'est montré solide et miraculeux et toujours conduisant à des hauteurs nouvelles — aussi vrais et aussi splendides. Cela est beaucoup dire. Pour que les choses humaines deviennent vraiment des objets divins et satisfaisent à nos âmes pleinement, il faut qu'un miracle se produise — car ce n'est pas la coutume.

Ma première école était en Touraine à côté du château d'Anatole France. Là, j'essaya pour la première fois des ailes et, lentement, en tremblant, je les étendis, peu à peu jusqu'à ce que j'obtins mon "brevet" de pilote. Maintenant je passe à travers les derniers moments d'apprentissage: c'est le perfectionnement, les manœuvres, la science. D'ici sous peu je serai près pour le front et avec un enthousiasme débordant je partirai vers l'horizon fatal. Déjà je vole sur l'appareil rapide qu'on emploie au front et déjà à la sérénade féerique du vol s'ajoute les premiers échos de la farouche symphonie du combat.

C'est un appel qui fouette mon jeune sang et double l'enthousiasme d'un cœur en pleine romance et d'une âme en vaste extase.

Il y a peu de jours, j'ai reçu mes galons de 1er lieutenant, ce qui est un gentil cadeau de noël.

Acceptez, je vous prie, la reconnaissance que je vous offre à pleins bras ces jours de nouvel an, et lorsque les carillons de 1918 sonnent, trouvez y les vœux joyeux de votre jeune et dévoué ami. Brûlez aussi pour moi une chandelle sacrée à la future année de la petite et veuillez étendre à Pierre l'espoir et la foi que j'ai en lui. Dites à Madame Rose qu'elle m'est une vraie grand'mère, toujours bonne et souriante.

Respectueusement je me souscris

votre serviteur constant

(signé) JACK WRIGHT

Air Service
American Expeditionary Forces
Via Paris

LETTER FROM THE CELEBRATED FRENCH SCULPTOR ÉMILE ANTOINE BOURDELLE TO THE MOTHER OF JACK

CHÈRE MADAME —

Vous comprenez que je ne risque pas une telle lettre. Je vous la garde et lisez-en la copie.

A son arrivée à Paris, Jack passa une journée à St. Cloud avec nous — il la passa à me persuader de le pousser, de lui conseiller d'être aviateur. Je m'y refusai comme pris de double vue, ce qui m'arrive souvent.

Je lui dis et redis, je ne peux prendre une telle responsabilité, car je crois l'arme de l'air la plus dangereuse pour le soldat. Mesurez bien tout avant de vous décider, lui dis-je.

Quelque temps après Jack vient me voir il me dit, je n'ai que vous en France — vous êtes connu, donnez-moi un certificat de caractère, de volonté, de raison, de ténacité. Ah! bien vous être décidé, Jack, vous voulez être aviateur. Absolument, me dit-il — Je vous demande un certificat. Bien, lui dis-je. Je le fais et je lui donnai le certificat qu'il avait le droit de me demander.

Il semble, Madame, que le destin l'avait choisi — l'avais-je compris, je l'ai disputé au destin. Cet enfant-homme, ce héros en fleur, me touchait profondément. Mais, le maître des existences a fait la sienne surhumaine.

Icare tomba pour vouloir atteindre au soleil. La lumière le prit, et, brûlé, il tomba lumineux.

Jack a voulu monter rejoindre la victoire du droit

il l'a rencontrée dans le ciel — elle est immortelle, et, brûlé d'immortalité, il ne pouvait pas rester homme.

Jack, chers amis, ne peut pas être pleuré. Il est devenu élan, devoir, justice, honneur — il est le héros pur dont l'âme et la vie se sont données — et qui n'a pas levé son arme contre aucun mortel, qui n'a eu permission de Dieu que de faire le geste de la foi et du sacrifice. Jack ne peut pas être pleuré.

Ah! notre regret oui — Cet enfant, cette grande figure était l'adolescence éternelle du beau — il restera en nous tous comme une religion.

LA FIN